**University of Alberta**

# The End of Stagnation? A Reexamination of Domestic Policy in the Soviet Union from 1982-1985 under the Leadership of Iurii Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of History and Classics

in

History

Edmonton, Alberta
Fall 2008

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Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

*Your file Votre référence*
*ISBN: 978-0-494-46949-1*
*Our file Notre référence*
*ISBN: 978-0-494-46949-1*

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**Abstract**

This thesis examines the domestic policies enacted by both Iurii Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko during their brief terms as General Secretary of the Soviet Union from 1982 to 1985. Through the examination of a number of official party documents, decrees, speeches and writings, and newspapers, the thesis questions the common perception of this period as one of stagnation that continued from the era of Leonid Brezhnev is disproved. The above-mentioned sources are used to re-examine economic policy, managerial reforms and the development of consumer goods. Not only was this "interregnum" (between Brezhnev's lengthy rule and Mikhail Gorbachev's ascendance) different from the periods that preceded and followed it, but the policies of Andropov and Chernenko differed from each other, thus creating another element that undermines the myth of continued stagnation. It is posited that the existing literature regarding this interregnum fails to recognize the impact that the policy alterations enacted by these leaders had on the future direction of the Soviet Union.

**Acknowledgements**

This thesis would not have been possible without assistance and support from my University. In particular, the Department of History and Classics at the University of Alberta has financially supported my research and travel over the past two years and as such allowed me to gather important documents that otherwise would not be available. Dr. David Marples provided me with invaluable support and advice throughout this process and helped me to realize my full potential. Through its Summer Research Laboratory, the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Centre at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign provided me with essential materials and the university's librarians offered helpful advice on their collections. However, none of this would have been possible without the encouragement I received at Dalhousie University from both Norman Pereira and Natalia Koutovenko who from the very beginning of my university career pushed me to succeed in my studies of both Russian history and language. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends who continued to support me throughout this process, through good times and bad and from all sides of the country. Your support and words of encouragement gave me the confidence I needed to persevere and I appreciate everything.

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**Introduction**

The collapse of the Soviet Union, and the monumental political and social tumult that directly preceded it, have been examined and reexamined by scholars over the past two decades.[1] As the initiator of Perestroika and Glasnost, Mikhail Gorbachev has been regarded habitually as the man who wrenched the Soviet Union out of its decades-long decline and stagnation and thrust it into an environment where every aspect of the country was forced to adapt in order to survive in a technologically and scientifically advanced world. Since Gorbachev's ascendance to power until the present day, scholars have speculated on the origins and motivations behind his large scale reforms without thoroughly searching for their roots.[2] The stagnation of the later years of Leonid Ilich Brezhnev's lengthy regime of 1964 to 1982 is often used to accentuate the degree of change that began immediately following Gorbachev's climb to power; however, the interregnum period between these two historic leaders is largely omitted in the scholarship.[3] The argument that economic decline, détente, and a gerontocratic leadership prevailed until March 1985 is commonly perpetuated, when in fact, the interregnum leaders demonstrated both desire and willingness for reform. Though each had very short terms in office, Iurii Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko attempted to

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[1] See for example: Valery Boldin *Ten Years that Shook the World. The Gorbachev Era as Witnessed by his Chief of Staff* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Alexander Dallin ed., *Russian and Soviet History 1500-1991. The Gorbachev Era* (New York: Garland, 1992); Mark Galeotti, *Gorbachev and his Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

[2] See Michel Tatu, *Mikhail Gorbachev. The Origins of Perestroika* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1991); and especially Martin McCauley, *Gorbachev* (London: Longman, 1998) who provides little background on the interregnum period unless it is directly related to Gorbachev's personal advancement within the party.

[3] The term interregnum is used throughout this thesis to describe the period of 1982-1985. Although both Andropov and Chernenko were legitimate rulers according to the Soviet pattern, the deaths of three leaders in rapid succession prevented permanent stability in the upper echelons of the Communist Party. It is the temporary nature of these leaders' positions that has prompted the use of this term to describe the period at hand.

implement new policies that could have revitalized and restructured the Soviet government and economy.

There has been a history of economic reform in the Soviet Union—the interregnum leaders were not the first to implement such a program. As early as the 1920s mechanisms were put in place to ensure and promote economic prosperity in different aspects of the economy. Vladimir Lenin began economic reforms with the introduction of the New Economic Policy in 1921 in an effort to rebuild the country after years of war and provide impetus for private farming and smaller industrial enterprises. Shortly thereafter, Joseph Stalin introduced the Five-Year Plan system which continued to be used as a central planning system until the end of the Soviet Union. Although this program prevailed, many leaders altered different aspects of its foundations over the years. For example Nikita Khrushchev radically altered the governing structure when he split the government into two factions: one to monitor industry and the other for agriculture. Khrushchev's reforms in agriculture have been criticized as being ill-thought-out and hastily implemented. As mentioned below, the Kosygin reforms of the early Brezhnev era (based on initiatives carried out in the late Khrushchev period) proved too controversial as they distributed a modicum of control among the managers of factories and had the potential once again of decentralizing the Soviet system. It was with this history of attempted economic reform that both Andropov and Chernenko approached the nationwide economic slowdown they inherited from the lengthy and somewhat stagnant Brezhnev regime.

The twenty-eight month interregnum was instrumental in the revitalization of the country. Brezhnev's protracted illness increased economic and political stagnation, thus

making any degree of change welcome to the Soviet people. His death prompted a plethora of publications that speculated about the future of the leadership and direction of the Soviet Union.[4] Despite Andropov's advanced age and dwindling health, journalists and scholars alike remained optimistic in their observations regarding his ability to reinvigorate the party. Many Western journalists hoped that he would bring new policies and personnel to the Kremlin and, despite the skepticism surrounding his background in the KGB, rumours of his liberal inclination abounded.[5] These expectations for the Soviet Union evaporated when Andropov died merely fifteen months after coming to power. Suddenly, publications regarding his life and career ceased and his name virtually disappeared from the press. Arguably, because of the abrupt end to Andropov's term, the noticeable lack of tangible results from his reforming policies, and the poor health and advanced age of Konstantin Chernenko, these years have been largely ignored by scholars of the Soviet Union.

Over the past two decades, little has been written on this brief interregnum although there is an abundance of material addressing the periods that both precede and follow it. In terms of historiography, the majority of the works available are political biographies, each with their own bias and generally without in-depth analysis of political activity. In Andropov's case specifically, these political biographies provide a basic overview of his career with the Communist Party, with an emphasis on his time in Hungary as Soviet Ambassador and especially as leader of the KGB. Given that they are

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[4] Most of the volumes that appeared immediately thereafter were collections of essays. See for example Robert Byrnes, ed., *After Brezhnev* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); and Martin McCauley, ed., *The Soviet Union after Brezhnev* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983).

[5] Vladimir Solovyov and Elena Klepikova, *Yuri Andropov: A Secret Passage into the Kremlin*, trans. Guy Daniels (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1983); and Martin Ebon, *The Andropov File. The Life and Ideas of Yuri V. Andropov* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1983).

predominantly penned by journalists and not historians or political scientists, they are consistently lacking in analysis, objectivity and most importantly, satiated with opinion masked as 'fact'.[6] These books neither include footnotes/endnotes or bibliographies, nor do they provide citations of the documents in which their comments or statistics can be qualified, with the exception of the monograph by Martin Ebon.[7] In the case of Chernenko, only one monograph has been published and, while useful, it does not analyze his term but outlines the conditions leading up to its commencement.[8] A memoir of one of his aides is also available, but aside from these two volumes, the only secondary literature available is works that address the late Brezhnev and Andropov periods as well, thus perpetuating the myth that stagnation continued from the mid-Brezhnev regime until the advent of Gorbachev.[9] Why was Chernenko given so little attention by the academic community? It can be argued that the tumultuous and turbulent years of Gorbachev's term completely overwhelmed scholars and therefore the interregnum years seemed all the more insignificant by comparison.

The culmination of these factors makes it very difficult to compile and write a historiography of this period. The lack of available information, as well as the short time span of 1982 to 1985, does not afford the historian an overarching framework within which to organize an argument. Thus, this introduction will briefly examine the

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[6] Dusko Doder, *Shadows and Whispers. Power Politics Inside the Kremlin from Brezhnev to Gorbachev* (New York: Random House, 1986); Solovyov and Klepikova, *Yuri Andropov.*; and Ebon, *The Andropov File*.

[7] Ebon, *The Andropov File* contains an appendix that contains a collection of primary documents but unfortunately, it is largely superficial and does not discuss some of the more distinguishing aspects of Andropov as a leader.

[8] Ilya Zemtsov, *Chernenko: The Last Bolshevik. The Soviet Union on the Eve of Perestroika* (Oxford: Transaction Publishers, 1989).

[9] See Viktor Pribytkov, *Apparat. 390 dnei i vsia zhizn genseka Chernenko* (Moskva: Molodaia gvardiia, 2002). For works that encompass the entire period and predominantly perpetuate the idea of stagnation see Hans-Joachim Veen, ed., *From Brezhnev to Gorbachev* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987); McCauley ed., *The Soviet Union after Brezhnev;* and Helmut Sonnenfeldt, ed., *Soviet Politics in the 1980s* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985).

numerous biographies written on both Andropov and Chernenko, as well as the methods used by historians as they viewed a slightly longer period 1979-1985 (beginning with the "stagnation" of the late Brezhnev era) as a more or less cohesive unit. It will be argued that this approach ignores the specific qualities and elements of each individual leader's term. By dissecting the literature in this way, the methods used by scholars regarding their specific fields will become a type of unifying source for the period.

Given that journalists comprised the majority of the literary community interested in Andropov, a number of problems arise for the historian looking to analyze this period today. Not only do journalists possess a different style of writing, but they also gather and analyze their information differently than historians. Many use personal political contacts as their main sources of information but do not disclose their identities, nor do they vouch for their reliability.[10] The Soviet media and physical activity surrounding the Kremlin (i.e. Kremlin watching), as well as the leaders, also appear to play a large role in the accumulation of ideas.[11] In terms of compiling history, this can cause problems in the understanding of the period, as the stories, statistics, and facts used may not be as reliable or consistent as documents that can be found in the archives. What do these sources, and the books that utilize them, contribute to the academic knowledge? Since the majority of the citations are published based on their anonymity there is no way to discern the credibility of the source outside the author's own judgment. In short, journalistic biographies provide an idea of what it was like to live in the Soviet Union during this

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[10] For example Doder, *Shadows and Whispers*.

[11] John W. Parker, *Kremlin in Transition. From Brezhnev to Chernenko, 1978-1985* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1991). Although Parker uses these approaches, he also seems to have more traditional methods of research as well based on his documentation and list of sources.

period of rapid succession, but they do not provide an in-depth analysis of the circumstances surrounding the leaders.

The ambiguity and inconsistency that often percolates works focused on Andropov's term, is a result of a number of factors. The majority of these books were published soon after he gained power in 1982, and only a few were published after his death. As a result, a significant portion of the material remains speculative. The political biographies that appeared within his first six months, examine Andropov in isolation rather than within the historical context of 'Soviet tradition.'[12] Of all the biographies, not one predicted that his term would be without reform. There was an overwhelming consensus that this was the leader who, if given the time, would change the course of the Soviet Union.[13] The same could not be said about the material regarding Chernenko's term in power. Ilya Zemtsov's biography, although written in 1989, and despite the available resources, does not provide an in-depth analysis of the consequences of his leadership. Rather, it centers around Chernenko's patronage and network building as a close associate of Brezhnev. Although this is a significant topic, and speaks to a larger development that occurred during the late Brezhnev term and continued throughout the interregnum period, it does not address the ideology or motivation behind Chernenko's policies. The historiography surrounding the Chernenko leadership is superficial and ultimately overlooks any analysis beyond a mere biographical account. In part because of the disillusionment felt by the scholarly community following Andropov's death which was a result of their expectations that he could produce significant changes in the Soviet Union, and in part because of the excitement surrounding Gorbachev's prospects,

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[12] By 'Soviet tradition' what is meant is the process of comparing a leader to his predecessors and placing him in the context of the factors leading up to his accession.

[13] This is most noticeable in the political and journalistic biographies mentioned above.

Chernenko's career was never properly documented or evaluated as a significant period in Soviet history.

As previously mentioned, aside from biographies, collections of essays that cover the entire interregnum period are available as a relatively reliable source of secondary material.[14] As with the biographies, most of these collections were written and published while either Andropov or Chernenko continued to hold the post of General Secretary and thus do not have conclusive results, findings, or observations that one would expect had the field continued to be of particular interest to Soviet scholars. All these edited works were written by Western scholars, mostly from the United States, but also from Western Europe. There are no collections that address this period in the same fashion from Russian scholars in the field, which prompts the question as to why the latter took no interest in the topic at all, especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The collections follow a generalized pattern in which they deal firstly with the broader problems facing or faced by the leaders and secondly, tackle specific issues but only insofar as they relate to economics or foreign policy—specifically with the United States. Although these collections are useful, they fail to examine the period from a global perspective. If these volumes looked at the period in question without such a strong emphasis on Soviet-American/Western relations, perhaps broader issues would have been more deeply analyzed.

Soon after Andropov's succession, scholars began to hold conferences, compile essays, and use their expertise to create cohesive collections that, if taken together, could provide an overarching framework for the period. The various authors address a

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[14] For example see Martin McCauley and Robert F. Byrnes ed., *After Brezhnev* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

multitude of topics within their specific fields and provide a well-rounded analysis of the problems faced by the leaders and the USSR, as well as the circumstances that surrounded their accession. One of the better collections is that edited by Hans-Joachim Veen.[15] While these articles were compiled and written before 1987, they are not restricted to the realm of speculation that engulfs the majority of material available. Conclusive statements are made about all aspects of the interregnum years and the leaders' decisions, and by having such a variety and number of shorter articles, a broader spectrum is examined. From collections like this it is possible to discern the impact of the policies of the interregnum leaders on the Soviet population as well as their international standing. Veen and his colleagues collaborated to compile a book that examines every aspect of the political, economic, and cultural situation of the Soviet Union during this integral period that is unparalleled by any other.

Since the departure of Mikhail Gorbachev, a few memoirs have been published by eminent Soviet statesmen. These memoirs, while clearly subjective and not always reliable, provide another perspective on the decisions of the Soviet government. This type of document supplements the existing secondary literature with both facts and personal insights. The available memoirs cover a wide range of material and discuss the interregnum leaders, as well as their personal relationships with Brezhnev and Gorbachev. Most of these collections cover as a minimum the period of 1982-1985, thus providing an insider's view of the attempted reforms, and of each individual leader. Surprisingly, Andropov is viewed positively by his old advisors despite the controversy

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[15] Veen ed., *From Brezhnev to Gorbachev*. This collection is divided into three sections that address the Soviet economy, culture and society, and political power. By including a number of articles in each section, this book tackles a broader spectrum of issues that were affecting the Soviet government at the time of rapid succession and continued to influence policy making under Mikhail Gorbachev.

that has surrounded the legacy of his term, especially with regard to Gorbachev.[16] Conversely, Egor Ligachev recalls the Andropov period, as well as those that follow, negatively despite the massive political, economic, and social changes that occurred in the Soviet Union. The use of memoirs as reliable sources is difficult as memory has a large impact on the telling of history. For example, Ligachev's recollections relate stories that do not always correspond with the prevailing opinion presumably because of his bitter feelings towards the individual leaders.[17] Despite the lack of literature regarding Chernenko, one of his main advisors has also written a memoir. It is one of the only complete volumes that is dedicated to his term and contains an analytical approach despite its partiality. Viktor Pribytkov recalls Chernenko fondly, and while he recounts many details of the political environment of the time, he also provides insight into the way Chernenko behaved with his colleagues as well as in his personal life.[18] This style of book is useful for its unique perspective on the period and acts as a supplement to both the secondary and primary literature in the understanding of all aspects of the Soviet leadership as it attempted to emerge from a time of stagnation.

Despite the time constraints that one encounters when evaluating the literature of this period, we discover that there is a general consensus regarding the policies and careers of the two interregnum leaders. The late Brezhnev years are consistently referred to as "stagnant" and accompanied by a slowdown in economic growth; Andropov was perceived as a potential reformer, even after his death, and scholars believe that had he been afforded the time, he would have been able to improve the functioning of the state,

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[16] A. M. Aleksandrov-Agentov, *Ot Kollontai do Gorbacheva* (Moskva: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia, 1994). Aleksandrov-Agentov was one of the few Soviet officials that survived the entire interregnum and served under Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko.
[17] Egor Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).
[18] Pribytkov, *Apparat.*

at the very least; Chernenko was perceived unanimously as a return to Brezhnev-style leadership and a man loyal to his patron and unwilling to give the leadership to the new generation of prospective leaders.[19] The limited availability of sources is a continuous problem for scholars of this period and the one that followed. There is no divergence in the material or the sources used to construct the various arguments. However, if the documents are closely examined it is possible to state that the interregnum period was not stagnant but rather rife with ideas, policies, and decrees that prove the leaders wished to do more than hold the ceremonial title of General Secretary and indulge in ritualistic self-praise.

This thesis will explore and analyze the question whether the interregnum years of 1982-1985 were merely a continuation of the stagnation of the Brezhnev period as is commonly maintained in the current literature or whether they merit treatment as a separate and significant era. It is postulated that these years, specifically when compared to the later years of the Brezhnev regime, demonstrate considerable progress in the realm of economic and social policy as well as reforms—if not in tangible results, at the very least in thoughts, ideas, and potential changes. This trend, it is hypothesized, is also visible through personnel and policy reforms. Preliminary research indicates that Andropov proposed and executed more changes than his successor, Konstantin Chernenko, whose desire it was to continue with Brezhnev's preferred form of governing despite the public pronouncements he made in favour of reform and progress.[20] Ultimately, the majority of the secondary material agrees with this. However, if the primary documents, especially Chernenko's speeches, material from the Plenums of the

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[19] This argument is reinforced in most monographs and collected works written and published post 1985 as has been discussed above.

[20] Donald R. Kelly, *Soviet Politics from Brezhnev to Gorbachev* (New York: Praeger, 1987).

Central Committee, and *Decisions of the Party and Government on Economic Questions*, are thoroughly examined it appears that Chernenko was not as conservative and conventional as once thought. By combining the government documents with the few articles that treat Chernenko more objectively, this thesis will subject the theory that claims these leaders, and Chernenko specifically, perpetuated stagnation, to close scrutiny.[21]

The first chapter of this work will analyze the economic situation of the Soviet Union at the time of Andropov's succession as well as the factors and decisions that led up to it. From this point, it will be possible to discern the different styles of governance held by each leader. The documents will illuminate the changes in rhetoric that were occurring in the late Brezhnev years that subsequently manifest themselves as tangible reforms. Under both interim leaders, the Food Program was a main focus in economic planning, although it was emphasized differently under each separate administration. Industry, both heavy and light, was encouraged to experiment in order to revitalize the slowing economy. By comparing the content of the decrees and documents to the statistical results of the reforms, it is possible to assess whether concrete changes were occurring.[22] There will be a noticeable shift in emphasis between the different leaders, but plans, ideas, and phrasing are consistent insofar as they call for a move forward. It will also be argued that Andropov acquired the title of "reformer" because of his initial willingness to admit publicly the economy's main problems. His frankness directly influenced the public's perception of his intentions and allowed him to please both the

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[21] John Hardt and Donna Gold, "Economic Reform: Soviet Style," in *From Brezhnev to Gorbachev,* ed., Hans-Joachim Veen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987) 107-125.

[22] Although Soviet statistics will be cited they are not always accurate or reliable and need to be taken in context with other sources.

Western and Soviet worlds at the same time.[23] It also permitted him the opportunity to take better control of the party's direction and public image in both the Soviet and Western press. Despite Andropov's initial reputation as a liberal and potential reformer, this chapter will propose that the period from 1979 demonstrated minor statistical evidence of revitalization, but ever increasing proposals and amendments that were discussed between different factions of the government that came to fruition.

Chapter Two will focus on managerial reforms, specifically the manner in which each leader approached factionalism within the Central Committee to increase his personal power. In order to secure their positions, the leaders were forced to eliminate their opponents while maintaining their standing among the party leadership. This chapter will portray Andropov as the more reform-minded of the interregnum leaders, as his 'mini-purge' will demonstrate. In part, it was the vigorous campaign against corruption that allowed Andropov to rid the party of old, corrupt, and often self-serving members—an effort that began before Brezhnev's death. Because of his short tenure, Andropov was unable to secure ultimate control over all elements of the government, meaning that the majority of reforms were conducted at the lower levels of the party bureaucracy. Despite this limitation, he was able to make some significant changes within the higher echelons of the party. Conversely, this chapter will expose Chernenko as a more loyal patron concerned for his comrades' positions, rather than a leader attempting to revitalize the party. In terms of personnel and party leadership, Chernenko returned to Brezhnev's style of collective leadership and careerism. It will be argued that in these three years, there were two waves of personnel changes, which served to undermine the long-prevailing concept of a period of continuous stagnation until the

[23] Zhores Medvedev, *Andropov* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1983),; and Parker, *Kremlin in Transition.*

inception of the Gorbachev leadership and reveal the networks that allowed both leaders to impose their ideas upon the rest of the Party.

The final chapter will focus on policy modifications outside of the economic, but within the domestic realm. Foreign policy will be largely excluded as it has been examined in depth by scholars both in Russia and the West.[24] Through an analysis of the interregnum leaders' speeches, writings, official decrees, and actual policy changes, the thesis will investigate and test the theory that the interregnum not only marked a decisive break with the so-called stagnation period but was an important forerunner to the more radical changes under Gorbachev. The documents scrutinized will help elucidate the premise that both leaders, to varying degrees, differentiated themselves from their predecessors in the way they were perceived at home as well as abroad—an element that will only be discussed briefly. The late Brezhnev era saw a retreat from the goal of improving living standards and return to traditional Soviet morals. Both Andropov and Chernenko understood the effects of the economic conditions on the attitudes of the Soviet people and the consequences they could have on the government.[25] A large shift in emphasis will be noticeable between the two administrations in the production of consumer goods. While Andropov did advocate increased production and experimentation in industry, Chernenko fervently supported a dramatic increase in the production of consumer goods. It is here that the more prevalent differences between the two leaders become apparent. Does this shift indicate that Chernenko was more in tune to the needs of the general population, or was Andropov's approach to overhaul heavy

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[24] For an in-depth study of foreign policy see Richard Staar, *The USSR After Détente* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987); and Parker, *Kremlin in Transition.*, etc.

[25] Alfred Evans Jr., "The Decline of Developed Socialism? Some Trends in Recent Soviet Ideology," *Soviet Studies* 38, no. 1 (Jan., 1986): 1-23.

industry at the expense of consumer goods a more viable method to revitalize the country? In this thesis, the specific areas of reform are not as important as the fact that change did occur and that each leader possessed his own ideas for the future of the Soviet Union, even though the current literature implies otherwise.

In conclusion, this thesis will tie these three vital elements together to discuss whether the era of stagnation ended with the Brezhnev regime and a reformist path was beginning to emerge several years earlier than is customarily thought. Political patronage networks continued to exist but were not necessarily exploited in the same way as they were in the past. Having analyzed the theory, predominantly through official Soviet documents, that this period marked a significant shift in Soviet politics, this thesis will offer a new perspective on a neglected topic. As a final point, since the interregnum lasted only three years the theory that the individual leaders did not have enough time to attain all the changes they desired, will be elaborated upon, with the help of Soviet newspapers. In the light of the collapse of the Soviet Union, some Russian journalists uphold the opinion that had the interregnum leaders lived longer, especially Andropov, that the transition into Perestroika and Glasnost would have been both smoother and more welcome under the Gorbachev regime.[26] In short, the concept of prolonged stagnation as a myth will be explored and its credibility will be assessed in this thesis in an effort to revitalize interest in a period in Soviet politics that has long been neglected by historians and political scientists.

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[26] Articles in *Izvestia* address this issue and will be discussed below.

**Chapter One: A Stagnating Economy: Strategic Attempts to Reverse a Recession**

The initial years of the Brezhnev regime produced some of the most substantial increases in economic growth since Stalin's industrialization campaign of the 1930s. Many Soviet citizens were appreciative of a structured collective leadership after a decade of Nikita Khrushchev's spontaneous and ill-thought-out policy making.[1] With a prosperous economy and a more conciliatory relationship with the West, Brezhnev was better able to secure his own position within the government and surround himself with cadres who would ultimately support his policies following the collective leadership that lasted until 1970. In the later years, as Brezhnev's health failed, he slowly lost control over Party officials and increasingly became dependent upon his advisors regarding important decisions. As will be discussed below, the stagnant economy of the later Brezhnev years was directly related to his cadres policies, increasing corruption and apathy amongst regional managers, as well as the continued military build-up. The degree of inertia compounded until production levels fell to a degree that was indicative of potential economic recession. Even though policies continued to be developed at lower levels of government, it appeared that decentralizing Party control would be the only cure for ongoing political complacency. Despite the slowing economic growth of the Soviet Union in the late 1970s as is noted by the declining GNP and other statistics, the government and Party never ceased its public appeal for increased production.[2] However, from 1982 to 1985, rapid succession prevented government officials and economists from the full realization of initiated reforms in industries such as agriculture

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[1] Georges Sokoloff, *The Economy of Détente. The Soviet Union and Western Capital* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 1.

[2] This is noticeable when one examines official Soviet documents, especially: Central Committee Plenums, official speeches, Party Congresses, collections of Party and Government Decisions, as well as others.

and energy and provided even more instability in the economy through the implementation and alteration of policies.

Brezhnev's death provided the prospect of a complete reinvigoration of the economy. It became apparent that if a dynamic, open-minded, and reform oriented leader took the post of General Secretary, the Soviet Union would be able to reverse the economic downturn it had experienced in past years. The quick decision to choose Andropov to be the new General Secretary, created an atmosphere of uncertainty within the upper echelons of the Party.[3] Having spent fifteen years as the head of the KGB, Andropov was an unlikely candidate for the post. He did not have strong support within the Party apparatus itself and, without sufficient allies, it would prove difficult for him to implement any sort of policy change. Despite these obstacles, Andropov immediately acknowledged the major faults in many aspects of Soviet life, including the economy. His direct approach to political problems was a refreshing change to foreign observers and contributed to the plethora of publications that speculated on his prospects as General Secretary.[4] Even though the Party leadership was not concerned with the opinions of the foreign press or academic communities, their interpretations of the succession are valuable to scholars today. Although Andropov was initially forthright with his plans regarding economic development, his successor, Chernenko, did not adopt the same approach. Chernenko was not perceived originally as a potential reformer since he

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[3] One scholar has gone so far as to state that Andropov's succession occurred so quickly that it resembled a "party coup" and severely disrupted the well-established comfort level that had been present for the previous almost two decades. See Ilya Zemtsov, *Andropov: Policy Dilemmas and the Struggle for Powers* (Jerusalem: IRICS Publishers, 1983), 93.

[4] This is evident in the many political biographies written around the time of his succession as outlined in the introduction to this work.

appeared hesitant to continue with Andropov's cadres policy.[5] His refusal to eliminate the cadres policy of the Brezhnev regime implied his reluctance to implement fundamental reforms in other aspects of the government, including economic policy. In spite of these initial indications, Chernenko proved, in some regards, to be the more reform-minded of the two interregnum leaders, especially with his emphasis on consumer goods. His economic policies were a reflection of his dedication to the Party as well as his emphasis on the quality of life of the Soviet people, which is indicative of his earlier roles in the Party apparatus as chief ideologue. In part, because he desired to continue with some of Brezhnev's policies he was more persistent about the success of the Food Program from its inception. As such, Chernenko validated his willingness to devote much needed attention to agricultural production, methods, and distribution in an attempt to ameliorate the economy. As will be discussed below, the dated methods with which this agricultural policy was created prevented a large scale reform in policy making, which could have been more beneficial to the Soviet Union than the small-scale, more specific reforming policies that continued to utilize the deep-rooted strategies of the Brezhnev, and even Khrushchev periods.

The Andropov-Chernenko interregnum proved to be turbulent for Soviet economic prospects. Each leader had a definite focus for his economic policy which, because of their politically premature deaths, went unfulfilled. While Andropov focused more on heavy industry and the energy sector as a means to reinvigorate the economy, Chernenko was oriented more toward raising the output of consumer goods and

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[5] As will be discussed in the following chapter, Andropov immediately adopted a radically different approach to the cadres than his predecessor. Through his anti-corruption and discipline campaigns, Andropov 'purged' elements of the government of leaders unwilling to operate solely in legitimate spheres of the economy and those who disregarded calls for efficiency in production and management.

secondary products not traditionally emphasized by past Party leaderships. Although they had their own distinct focus as well as different approaches, both leaders made some progress. The examination of a number of different aspects of the economy, including the Food Program, the advancement of scientific technology, the energy sector, as well as heavy and light industry, will indicate the different focal points of each individual leader. This chapter will analyze these industries in order to demonstrate, not uniformity, but an element of continuity in government policy creation and implementation. This element of continuity may not overtly signify a severe break with the past; however, it will illuminate the idea that the myth of stagnation does not apply in this case.

There are a number of factors that affected the efficiency of the Soviet Union's economy, many of which the government was unable to control. For a number of years, the Soviet Union was dependent upon foreign imports for food supplies and new technologies. This was a cause of both poor budgeting and domestic investments, but was also the result of a number of consecutively bad harvests, some of which were a result of Khrushchev's agricultural experiments, which affected all aspects of the agro-industrial complex. The government invested a large portion of the fiscal budget into improvident programs and policies including the defence sector, in order to maintain military parity with the United States. In addition to the diversion of funds to military development, the Soviet Union was facing internal problems. It was increasingly difficult to relocate new workers to isolated areas as the rural population was falling and raw materials that were once found in abundance were depleting because of poor

conservation efforts.[6] This compounded the stress felt by the government to revitalize the economy and provide the population with sustainable resources for the future.

The examination of primary documents, especially newspapers, speeches, and Party Congresses, will illuminate the different reforms that were implemented by each leader. By including official statistics in the documents, the leaders were able to reinforce to the public that the government was making tangible changes that would improve the everyday lives of the average Soviet citizen. It will be argued that despite the inertia of the late Brezhnev era, a handful of 'new' policies were drafted and discussed within different ministries. Rapid succession restricted the new leaders' abilities to reverse completely the policies that Brezhnev put in place in the months preceding his death. By examining the documents of early 1980s and comparing them to the statistics and official results published at the end of Chernenko's term it will become evident that an economic upturn occurred with the advent of Iurii Andropov.[7] Of primary focus will be the Food Program, which is arguably the largest reform that was carried through the entire interregnum period. Also of great importance will be the drives for increased production in the industrial and energy sectors. It becomes evident that Chernenko was the more fervent supporter of economic reform as a means to reinvigorate the Soviet Union whereas Andropov focused more on restructuring the Party apparatus, as will be discussed in the following chapter. Through the examination of different

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[6] *Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR za 70 let. Iubileinyi statisticheskii ezhegodnik* (Moscow: Finansy i Statistika: 1987), 373. Whereas in 1979, 37.7% of the population resided in rural communities, by 1981 it was only 36.6% and by the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev it had fallen to 34.4%. These drops may not appear significant but when compared to the early Brezhnev period when 43.7% of the population was rural, these numbers amount to the migration of millions of workers no longer willing to contribute to the rural economy as well as high mortality rates among the ageing population in the countryside.

[7] The comparison of statistics from *Narodnoe Khoziaistvo SSSR* with documents from the 26th Party Congress, CPSU Decisions, and Party and Government Decisions provides the foundation for this argument.

aspects of the Soviet economy and the notable difference in each leader's approach to the problems in Soviet society, the view that the interregnum was a period of stagnation will be investigated.

I

By the late 1970s, it was evident that the economy of the Soviet Union was slowing down and Brezhnev's ritualistic methods of governance and lack of innovation were taking their toll on the everyday lives of the Soviet people. The Party leaders continued to propagate successes, for example that "the XXV Congress of the CPSU defined the perfect direction of the economic mechanism" of the Soviet Union.[8] Although decrees continued to be drafted for the improvement of economic production, statistics demonstrated that the growth of the GNP declined notably between 1978 and 1982. Whereas the USSR's GNP grew 3.7% per annum between 1976 and 1978, there was a growth of only 1.6% per annum between 1979 and 1982.[9] This decelerated production drew attention to Brezhnev's inability to govern, arguably because of his declining health and failure to introduce "fresh blood" into the Party. As discussed below, agriculture suffered the most during this period. Although it experienced a per annum growth of 5.2% between 1976 and 1978, the years 1979-1982 saw a negative growth of -0.9% per annum.[10] The problems experienced in the last years of the Brezhnev regime were a combination not only of poor management and planning, but also of consecutively bad harvests and decreased imports as a result of the US grain

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[8] Resheniia partii i pravitelstva po khoziaistvennym voprosom. Tom 13, Aprel 1979-Mart 1981, *Postanovlenie TsK KPSS. O dalneishem sovershenstvovanii khoziaistvennogo mekhanizma i zadachakh partiinykh i gosudarstvennykh organov, 11 iiulia 1979* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1981), 76.

[9] Robert F. Miller, "The Soviet Economy: Problems and Solutions in the Gorbachev View," in *Gorbachev at the Helm. A New Era in Soviet Politics?* ed., R. F. Miller, J. H. Miller and T. H. Rigby (London: Croom Helm,1987), 115.

[10] Ibid.

embargo imposed in 1980. This was not only detrimental to the overall growth of the Soviet economy during these years, but also increased the Soviet Union's dependency on alternative foreign imports to feed the population, as well as undermined the prestige of the CPSU throughout the country.

Despite this slowed growth, Party documents indicate that the late Brezhnev leadership was concerned about the economic requirements of the country as plans and programs were constantly reviewed and often revised in the hopes of reinvigorating the economy. The primary problem with these drafts was the manner in which they were implemented. Essentially, the Brezhnev leadership drafted a number of plans that its successors later used. Whereas Brezhnev's approach emphasized the steady progression of the economy, the interregnum leaders, especially Andropov, urged a more radical and immediate change. Frequently, rather than drafting entirely new policies, the fulfillment of existing government plans and tasks became the documents' focus. In August 1981, it was stated that "in the last years, the Central Committee of the CPSU has raised attention to the examination of the fulfillment of party decisions, which became mostly to listen to leaders of various levels, personnel that determined the direction of work."[11] Although anticipated economic goals were not reached, the government appeared optimistic and its political rhetoric indicated that it was experiencing minor setbacks that could easily be overcome. This sense of denial forced the Party to "concentrate attention on the successful completion of the tasks of the current year, the fulfillment, and over-

[11] Resheniia partii i pravitelstva po khoziaistvennym voprosom. Tom 14, Aprel 1981-Dekabr 1982, *O dalneishem sovershenstvovanii kontrolia i proverki ispolneniia v svete reshenii XXVI sezda KPSS. 11 avgusta 1981*, (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1983), 152.

fulfillment of the [current] plan…and the aims of the Five Year Plan."[12] This lack of preparation for the future, and excessive concentration on the completion of previously commenced tasks, provided the foundation for the pattern of declining growth and excessive bureaucracy to continue.

Traditionally, the Soviet government's economic emphasis was on military buildup and heavy industry, with the occasional decree that highlighted the need to raise output in light industry, consumer goods, or to increase housing. Agriculture was the most persistent problem. Perhaps the most significant legacy Brezhnev left to Andropov and Chernenko was the Food Program through which he planned to increase production levels in the agricultural complex and alleviate the need for food imports. Through this program, announced at the 26th Party Congress in May 1982, it was expected that a drastic growth in production would stimulate other elements of the economy and reduce the tension on the economic system. The efforts of both interregnum leaders to fulfill the Food Program, albeit with different degrees of urgency, not only continued Brezhnev's policies, but also were a means to consolidate their position and efficacy as General Secretary. Aside from the Food Program, Brezhnev showed marginal interest in the improvement of other industries. In 1980, the government did express concern regarding the quantity of available raw materials and natural resources across the Soviet Union and the impact that proper usage could have on the Soviet economy.[13] The documents demonstrate that the Brezhnev leadership wavered between exploiting and ignoring

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[12] Resheniia partii i pravitelstva po khoziaistvennym voprosom. Tom 14, *O proektakh gosudarstvennogo plana ekonomicheskogo i sotsialnogo razvitiia SSSR na 1981-1985 gody, gosudarstvennogo plana ekonomicheskogo i sotsialnogo razvitiia SSSR na 1982 god i gosudarstvennogo biudzheta SSSR na 1982 god. 16 noiabria 1981*, 249.

[13] Svod zakonov SSSR. Tom 5, *O merakh po dalneishemu uluchsheniiu ispolzovaniia vtorichnogo syria v narodnom khoziaistve. 25 ianvaria 1980* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo izvestiia, 1989), 211. This document illustrates the different uses for secondary raw materials as well as the different ways in which their production can be ameliorated.

potentially lucrative industries that possessed the possibility of improving the economic standing of the USSR.

The last years of Brezhnev's life actually witnessed a revival in the creation of new plans and goals for the coming years. For example, there was to be "considerably increased output of underclothes for newborns and preschool children, shoes, rubber boots, notebooks, pencils, bathroom soap, tea, and other goods."[14] The leaders recognized the need to restore the growth of production levels to their mid-1970s level as is demonstrated throughout the documents. In February 1981, the 26th Party Congress presented lofty goals for the upcoming Five-Year Plan, many of which would be difficult to fulfill if a structural modernization of the central governing system was not initiated. Without specifically outlining how goals might be achieved, it was stated that the Five-Year Plan would increase output in "industry…by 36 percent, and the rural economy by 47 percent."[15] Despite the increased demand for a more efficient economy, the Brezhnev leadership neglected to provide sufficiently specific direction for each individual ministry so that in the future, it could successfully achieve its goals. Because the majority of the decrees put forth at the 26th Party Congress and other documents of the late Brezhnev era consisted of reiterations of old policies cloaked in new phraseology, it seemed unlikely that a radical change was possible.[16] A number of articles written by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty authors outwardly criticized the "reforms" by demonstrating the

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[14] Resheniia partii i pravitelstva. Tom 14, *Ob uvelichenii proizvodstva tovarov massovogo sprosa, povyshenii kachestva i uluchchenii ikh assortimenta v 1981-1985 godakh. 30 iiulia 1981*, 64.
[15] XXVI Sezd KPSS: Edinstvo teorii i praktiki. Vypusk 2, Andrei Kirilenko, *Edinaia tekhnicheskaia politika partii no sovremennom etape kommunisticheskogo stroitelstva*, (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1985), 128.
[16] Parker, *Kremlin in Transition.*

ways in which the policies were outdated and that innovation was needed.[17] Thus, Brezhnev left his successor with many goals to accomplish but few clear-cut ideas with which to encourage working citizens to help accelerate their country's economic development.

II

Within weeks of his election to the post of General Secretary, Andropov began to assert his independence from more conservative members of the Party. At the Central Committee Plenum on 22 November 1982, Andropov vacillated between praising his predecessor, thus legitimizing his own position, and accentuating some of the major problems facing the new Soviet leadership. This direct approach was atypical among Soviet leaders as traditionally, unless the preceding leader was denounced, (as with Khrushchev's belated critique of Stalin at the 20th Party Congress) the new leader remained publicly appreciative of his predecessor until his own power base was secured. Andropov, having a power base founded in the KGB, boldly pointed out the faults of the Brezhnev regime and began criticizing several Party officials and the policies they endorsed. Andropov depicted Brezhnev as a "consistent, ardent and indefatigable fighter for peace,"[18] but only a few days later indicated that "the first two years of the Five-year Plan have not been fulfilled for a number of major indicators."[19] This juxtaposition of praise and criticism emphasized Andropov's willingness to compromise Party tradition in order to create progress in the economic sphere by means of introducing a sense of self-

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[17] See Keith Bush, "Brezhnev's New (?) Food Program," *Radio Free Europe,* 25 May, 1982; Allan Kroncher, "Brezhnev's Food Program—A Road Leading Nowhere," *Radio Free Europe,* 2 June, 1982; Carey Cavanaugh "Gorbachev and the Food Program: Weak Support for a Weak Policy," *Radio Free Europe,* 2 July, 1982.

[18] Iurii Andropov, "Speech at the Extraordinary Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee, Nov 12 1982," *Speeches and Writings,* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1983), 243.

[19] Iu. V. Andropov, "Rech generalnogo sekretaria TsK KPSS Iu. V. Andropova," *Materialy Plenuma Tsentralnogo Komiteta KPSS Noiabr 1982* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1982), 7/8.

criticism among party members. The enthusiasm this created lasted the duration of his term but was then thwarted by the apparent indifference of Chernenko's team. The second succession also created a shift in Party policy; however Chernenko did not proceed as quickly as Andropov in his adaptation of 'radical' reforms. His speeches were not as blunt, nor did he attack his predecessors as much as he adopted several of their ideas and transformed them to suit his own ideals. Chernenko's general hesitancy regarding reform contrasted with that of Andropov. Andropov's general willingness to undertake reform stemmed largely from his political background, as opposed to Chernenko's nebulous personal desire to aggrandize the legacy of his former patron.

The Soviet Union had fallen technologically behind the West, and the gap had widened in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Both interregnum leaders recognized the need for new technologies and methods to be adopted and sternly enforced. The distinguishing factor between Andropov and Chernenko was their approach to this problem. Andropov viewed economic problems as a reflection on the leadership that needed to be remedied immediately, whereas Chernenko adopted a more moderate approach, emphasizing long-term plans and goals rather than quick and potentially impulsive solutions. Chernenko stated that "we need to see clearly, that long term economic progress of the country in this decisive stage depends on how they use all available resources, from our ability to bring into action great creative strength, placing in itself the economic character of developed socialism."[20] Although Chernenko's planning did not appear as radical or reform oriented as the policies of his predecessor, this far-sighted approach was in fact

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[20] K. U. Chernenko, *Na uroven trebovanii razvitogo sotsializma: Nekotorye aktualnye problemy teorii, strategii i taktiki* (Moscow: Politizidat, 1984), 15.

better for the economic prospects of the Soviet Union. The divergent approaches strived toward the same goal—one of prosperity and wealth for the Soviet Union.

Both the Western and Soviet press commented openly on the different styles of these two leaders. Speeches and documents published in the Soviet media explicitly and simply expressed the plans of the government. Throughout his term, Andropov reinforced the idea that his government's top priority was first, management; second, organization in the economy; and third, strengthening the government, labour, and discipline of workers.[21] Thus, Andropov acknowledged the importance of the economy, but, contrary to most Soviet Party officials, he believed that economic problems stemmed primarily from managerial and disciplinary issues at all levels of industry. This approach allowed him, in the short term, to restructure the Party in the hope that new personnel would resolve the problem. However, Andropov did not provide adequate long-term planning for strictly economic problems. On the contrary, Chernenko planned for the future stating, "today, like never before, we need an imminent postponement of large decisions and organizational work, in order to raise considerably the effectiveness of the economy and steadily improve the quality of life of all Soviet people."[22] The realization that Chernenko was concerned about the long-term prosperity of the economy demonstrates his potential as a legitimate reformer as opposed to Andropov's quest for short-term gains.

The aggressive terminology used in Soviet newspapers immediately following Brezhnev's death signified a reinvigorated attitude toward political and economic reforms. The frequent use of the word *perestroika* in both documents and official

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[21] "Chetvertyi god piatiletki," *Izvestiia*, 31 dekabria 1983.
[22] "Trud i znaniia—partii, rodine," *Izvestiia,* 12 aprelia 1984.

speeches and decrees is one example. In early 1983, the term did not carry the same weight as in Gorbachev's term, and Andropov's use of the word did not denote radical changes. Rather than signifying a complete restructuring of the government and the Party, Andropov used the word to amplify his desire to reinvigorate the economy without major changes to the existing structure. Although Chernenko's phraseology was less ambitious than that of Andropov he continued the theme of mild *perestroika* in his speeches as well.[23] Chernenko applied the term more frequently than Andropov. Although Andropov and Chernenko were perceived differently by Western analysts, they essentially worked toward the same goals using different methods. If the terminologies and expressions of the leaders are taken as an indication of their intentions, and not purely propaganda, then the shift from stagnation to revitalization becomes more striking. Although many scholars may see this political jargon as part of a well-established Soviet tradition, it is posited here that the tone of the documents changed with the interregnum leaders and expressed a sense of urgency that reaffirmed the Party's desire for political and economic advancement.

Iurii Andropov adopted a realistic posture toward the many problems his government faced. Although the Soviet leaders did not believe they were approaching a crisis state, the slowdown of the economy was stressed increasingly in Party decisions and discussions. In late 1982 when Andropov announced "the planned tasks for the first two years of the Five-Year Plan did not come to fruition" the severity of the economic

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[23] The use of the term "mild perestroika" indicates that the leaders were considering a minor restructuring of some aspects of the government, especially specific policies; however they were unwilling to enact a large-scale restructuring of the party apparatus as is seen in later periods of Soviet history.

situation began to come to light.[24] Since he and Chernenko theoretically agreed that reforms were necessary, it became more evident that they represented a distinct break from the past. Although Kosygin had drafted plans and policies that could have restructured economic productivity such as the Liberman program in 1965, the plans were undermined by the recentralization of the economy. The Liberman program proposed the use of a profit index in order to measure economic output. This theory not only provided incentives for increased production, but also placed a great amount of authority in the hands of local managers. Many parameters would remain centrally controlled; however, the degree of decentralization proposed in these reforms was too much for the new collective leadership of the mid 1960s.[25] Brezhnev's power allowed him to overrule these reforms and proceed with his own ideals for the development and operation of the economy. Andropov and Chernenko had weaker power bases than Brezhnev, making attempts at reform risky and potentially fatal for their careers. Despite the risks involved, the interregnum leaders boldly asserted their independence from the existing party line and attempted to enforce new policies that had the potential to undermine their positions. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, both their reforms and the methods with which they were introduced marked a break with the past.

III

With a large population and the largest territory in the world, producing and distributing adequate and proper food to the Soviet people was a perennial problem for the government. For two decades the Soviet government had been dependent upon

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[24] Iu. Andropov, "Rech na plenume TsK KPSS, 22 noiabria 1982," *Izbrannye rechi i staty* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1983), 210.
[25] Alfred Zauberman, "Liberman's Rules of the Game for Soviet Industry," *Slavic Review* 22, no. 4 (December 1963): 735-737.

agricultural imports to sustain the population and keep the agro-industrial complex from complete collapse. Before the introduction of the Food Program in the late Brezhnev era, the country was importing on average 12.5 million tons of grain per year.[26] This phenomenon was relatively new, as the early years of the Brezhnev era produced better results, importing on average 7.5 million tons per year. The mid-1970s show some improvements in agricultural production: between 1976 and 1978, only 5.8% of agricultural production was from net imports compared to 9.2% over the previous two years.[27] Most of these imports came from the United States. However, since the proportion in terms of overall production was marginal, it was not a major concern to the government. When, in the late seventies, net imports rose to 16.9% of overall production and continued to climb, the Food Program was introduced to reduce these needs.[28] This program was not well received by all members of the Party, nor was it praised in the Western press; however, government newspapers such as *Izvestiia* continued to promote its benefits throughout the entire period.[29] Despite the dated methods with which this policy was created, however, it represented a practical measure, as self-subsisting production and proper distribution of grain would ultimately boost the standard of living throughout the Soviet Union.

The introduction of the Food Program in the early eighties sparked mild tension between top government officials. According to his public statements and the

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[26] Stephen G. Wheatcroft, "Agricultural Reform, the Food Program and the 27th Party Congress," in *Gorbachev at the Helm,* ed., Miller, Miller, Rigby (London: Croom Helm, 1987). Averaged by author from appendix 1, 185.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Allan Kroncher, "Brezhnev's Food Program—A road leading nowhere," *Radio Free Europe,* 2 June 1982. Also, "O gosudarstvennom plane ekonomicheskogo i sotsialnogo razvitiia SSSR 1984 god," *Izvestiia*, 29 dekabria 1983; Mikhail Gorbachev, "Leninizm—zhivoe tvorcheskoi uchenie," *Izvestiia,* 23 aprelia 1983; "Zasedaniia verkhovnogo soveta SSSR," *Izvestiia,* 29 noiabria 1984, etc.

observations of the foreign press, Chernenko had "been in the forefront in heaping praises on the program" whereas Gorbachev, who by this time was clearly aligned with Andropov, believed that "a more systematic and goal-oriented approach [wa]s necessary to further develop integration processes and improve organizational forms of control."[30] This declamatory infighting between the different factions of the government was indicative of a power struggle that was beginning to emerge as Brezhnev's health rapidly declined. Nevertheless, Brezhnev's death and Andropov's succession did not herald the reversal of the implementation of the Food Program. Andropov supported the program; however, his emphasis appeared to be on more general remedies for a number of industries that included the agricultural complex rather than focusing all efforts on agriculture. In late 1983, *Izvestiia* cited Andropov as stating in terms of the revised plan for 1984, that "first and foremost, the proper direction of capital investment, material-technical and labour resources are necessary for the realization of the Food and Energy programs, as well as the accelerated development of base branches of industries and transport."[31] This statement is indicative of Andropov's desire to eliminate managerial inefficiencies as a means to fulfill the plans associated with the Food Program. Despite some criticisms, funding continued to be diverted into the program, partly, it is argued here, because of Andropov's feeble power base.

Chernenko was an avid supporter of Brezhnev and his policies, and subsequently wished to ensure his patron's successful legacy within the Party. Although while Andropov was in power, he was less outspoken on the Food Program, once he took over

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[30] Both references from Carey Cavanaugh, "Gorbachev and the Food Program: Weak Support for a Weak Policy," *Radio Free Europe*, 2 July 1982, 2.
[31] "O gosudarstvennom plane ekonomicheskogo i sotsialnogo razvitiia SSSR 1984 god," *Izvestiia,* 29 dekabria 1983, 13.

he stated that, "we must constantly and deeply analyze the realization of our important socio-economic programs: for example, the Food and Energy Programs."[32] The simple fact that Chernenko asserted such an opinion while the Party continued to be rife with Andropov's supporters, including Mikhail Gorbachev, indicates that Chernenko was determined to push through his policies and ideas and refused to allow the economy to succumb to stagnation as a result of a power transfer to a new team. Instead, Chernenko believed it was important to uphold Brezhnev's original policies, including the methods through which they had been implemented over the past two decades, even if new methods and approaches could have produced more rapid results.

The interregnum leaders clearly had different emphases on the development of the Food Program and agricultural production, but ultimately they possessed the identical goal of improving production as a means to raise overall economic prosperity across the Soviet Union. In terms of capital investment, the government contributed 1.2% less after the implementation of the Program over the period of 1981-1984 as compared to 1976-1980.[33] Despite this surprising drop in investment, agricultural production rose 1.1% over the same period with 0.5% in arable production and 1.1% in livestock production.[34] These numbers do represent marginal growth but it should be taken into account that the preceding five years saw greater growth (1.7% overall), which was in turn less than the early Brezhnev era where a growth rate of 2.5% was experienced, albeit in relation to an additional increase of the overall budget.[35] These numbers indicate that the continuation of the Food Program throughout the interregnum contributed to overall growth in the

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[32] K. U. Chernenko, "Rech generalnogo sekretaria TsK KPSS tovarishcha K. U. Chernenko," *Materialy plenuma tsentralnogo komiteta KPSS 10 aprelia 1984,* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1984), 20.
[33] Wheatcroft, "Agricultural Reform," ed., Miller, Miller, Rigby, appendix 4, 188.
[34] Ibid., appendix 3, 187.
[35] Ibid., appendices 3 and 4, 187 and 188.

Soviet economy and thus, although marginal, speaks to the theory that the interregnum was not stagnant. Although the final results did not reach the projected goals of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan, where agricultural output was targeted at 2.5% (average per year) and investment at 2.55% (average per year), growth continued to occur, even in the rural sector.[36]

Through the implementation and execution of this program Chernenko was able to consolidate his authority and in part, divert attention from a developing power struggle for the future post of General Secretary that engulfed the leading members of the Party. In a 26 March 1984 speech, Gorbachev quoted Chernenko as stating, "Through the efficient work of the agro-industrial complex, it seems as if it is necessary to further increase the material prosperity of the population as well as the efficacy of the management of the country."[37] Despite Gorbachev's outward support of Chernenko's statements and the Food Program, he had been a close associate of Andropov and upon the former's death there was speculation concerning his appointment to the post of General Secretary instead of Chernenko.[38] In this speech, Gorbachev commented on the size of the agro-industrial complex noting that it employed 48 million people and used "more than 30% of the fundamental industrial funds of the country."[39] The scale of this industry, combined with the urgency placed on the policy's success, forced any opposition to support Chernenko and the Central Committee of the CPSU reiterated to

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[36] Daniel Bond and Herbert Levine, "The 11th Five- Year Plan, 1981-85," *Russia at the Crossroads: The 26th Congress of the CPSU* ed. Seweryn Bialer and Thane Gustafson, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), 93.

[37] XXVI sezd KPSS: edinstvo teorii i praktiki. Vypusk 5, M. S. Gorbachev, *O zadachakh partiinykh, sovetskikh i khoziaistvennykh organov po povysheniiu ekonomicheskoi effektivnosti selskogo khoziaistva i drugikh otraslei agropromyshlennogo kompleksa, 26 marta 1984,* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1985), 237.

[38] Victor Pribytkov, *Apparat: 390 dnei i vsia zhizh Genseka Chernenko* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 2002), 56.

[39] M. S. Gorbachev, *O zadachakh partiinykh, sovetskhikh i khoziaistvennykh organov,* 240.

the public the importance of these new measures. This speech by Gorbachev is integral in understanding why Party leaders rallied behind a leader who appeared too old and sick to properly govern such an enormous and diverse territory with immense nuclear capabilities.

Under Andropov, Party officials were more willing and able to express their disillusionment with the government, but Chernenko partially reversed this trend and reverted back to an era where the General Secretary ultimately decides the direction of Party decision and policies, without criticism. The production and procurement of grain was not the only focus of the Food Program. It was understood, even during Brezhnev's term, that agricultural infrastructure, livestock, fodder, and other foods were integral elements to the success of agriculture and thus, the overall progress of the economy. The state acquired increasingly more goods as the program developed and it appeared to alleviate some of the shortages that were felt throughout the country. In his address on the 26 March 1984 to the all-union economic conference on problems within the agro-industrial complex, Gorbachev stated that "In conjunction with the republics, regions and oblasts, the production and purchase of meat, milk and eggs grew at comparatively high speed."[40] He goes on to outline that, from October 1983 to May 1984, the government purchased an additional 1.7 million tons of milk (or a growth of 6%) as compared to the preceding winter, and the acquisition of livestock increased by 11% and eggs by 4%.[41] Thus, official government statistics indicate that increased state procurement indicated a rise in production at a relative pace, demonstrating overall growth in the agricultural complex. Also, between 1980 and 1983, the production of fodder increased 3.7% and

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[40] Ibid., 244.
[41] Ibid., 244. Note that these figures indicate procurement and not consumption levels.

with each percentage increase in fodder, a 2.4% increase could be seen in wholesale production.[42] Statistically, the figures demonstrate the relative success of the program when properly managed at regional levels of the government. From the inception of the Food Program, it was known that maximal investment was needed in "each krai, oblast, region, each branch of the national economy, all labour collectives in cities and rural areas" in order for agricultural reorganization to prove fruitful.[43] The reorganization of investment to decentralized areas could not be possible without restructuring the entire Party apparatus to improve efficiency. As the following chapter will demonstrate, the short terms of both Andropov and Chernenko prevented large scale and in-depth reforms from being implemented, although many smaller amendments were indicative of their knowledge of the existing problems within the Party.[44]

The growing population of the Soviet Union combined with poor conservation of raw materials and lands contributed to shortages in grain, fodder, and other food products. Because of these increasing burdens on industry, it became necessary to discover new methods and areas to fulfill demands. Although Khrushchev's Virgin Lands Program of the late 1950s ultimately failed, a number of documents indicate that the government reconsidered the development of unused territories across the country in the late Brezhnev era.[45] In 1981, the Party leaders recognized that only 9% of the general territory produced more than 30% of all gross production and the expansion of utilized

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[42] Ibid., 254.

[43] Resheniia partii i pravitelstva po khoziaistvennym voprosom. Tom 14, 24 maia 1982, *O proekte prodovolstvennoi programmy SSSR na period do 1990 god*, 400.

[44] This is evident when the personnel changes of the Andropov period are examined with regards to his desire to increase economic productivity via managerial reforms, specifically the discipline and anti-corruption campaigns and contrasted with Chernenko's desire to revert to a Brezhnev-style leadership and 'trust in cadres' program.

[45] In 1953, Nikita Khrushchev decided to expand agricultural development by cultivating new territories in the so-called Virgin Lands of Kazakhstan. This program ultimately failed because of poor infrastructure, bad harvests, and unsuited territories.

land could result in a dramatic increase.[46] In an effort to expand land usage in fertile and under-used territories, the development of the non-black earth zones was greatly emphasized as part of the Five-Year Plan and it was to receive 775 million roubles from 1981-1985 to increase production, infrastructure, and rural development which would specifically aid in the development of forage grains such as corn and soya, a substantial increase in investment compared to R650 million in the previous Five-Year Plan.[47] Renewed efforts to revitalize underdeveloped agricultural territories created increased per capita food consumption in the USSR. Soviet statistics reported increased consumption of meat, milk, and eggs, although the consumption of grain fell and production of most other foods remained at the same levels throughout the Eleventh Five Year Plan.[48] These statistics indicate that while efforts to increase fodder may have resulted in a higher consumption rate of animal products and by-products, these same efforts failed to produce similar results in the remainder of agriculture.

As demonstrated by the documentary evidence above, the implementation and execution of the Food Program were a result of Brezhnev's initiative, but were ultimately manipulated and influenced by his successors. Chernenko was the most ardent supporter of this program, and throughout his leadership its importance was reiterated. Conversely, Andropov viewed managerial and organizational issues to be the crux of agricultural failure. Thus, under his leadership one can see a wavering in Party support for the program, despite the fact that it continued to exist and produce marginal improvements in

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[46] Resheniia partii i pravitelstva po khoziaistvennym voprosom. Tom 14, *O kompleksnoi programme razvitiia melioratsii zemel na 1981-1985 gody, 28 maia 1981*, 30.
[47] Resheniia partii i pravitelstva po khoziaistvennym voprosom. Tom 14, *Ob okazanii shefskoi pomoshchi stroietlstve obektov selskogo khoziaistva i sviazannykh s nim otraslei promyshlennosti v nechernozemnoi zone RSFSR v 1981-1985 godakh, 27 avgusta 1981*, 167.
[48] Stephen G. Wheatcroft, "Agricultural Reform, the Food Program and the 27th Party Congress, in *Gorbachev at the Helm,* ed., Miller, Miller, Rigby, Appendix 2, 186.

most sectors. As a result, the development of the non-black-earth lands in combination with the Food Program produced varying outcomes dependent upon whether the end goal was consumption rates or dependency upon foreign imports in relation to gross production. The leaders' divergent goals were arguably a result of poor communication between the various levels of the government inherent in the Soviet leadership for decades. In order to remedy this integral problem, a restructuring of the economic planning system was required, a task that was not to be fully undertaken until Mikhail Gorbachev came to power, but whose foundation was laid under Andropov, as will be discussed in the following chapter. With little time to consolidate their authority, the interregnum leaders were forced to accommodate existing economic policies such as the Food Program, and were obliged to focus on specific aspects of these programs rather than create entirely new ones. Despite this limitation, the adoption and adaptation of these agricultural programs demonstrates an end to the stagnation associated with Brezhnev and the beginning of a new era in Soviet economic policies.

## IV

The agro-industrial complex was not the sole economic focus of the Soviet government during the succession period. The underdeveloped territories of Siberia and the Far East of the RSFSR offered a plethora of untapped or underexploited resources that could facilitate exports and increase economic prosperity. The major obstacle that the government faced while trying to exploit these resources was the relatively small population in these areas, and the general public's unwillingness to relocate to these areas, which will not be an issue of focus here. Of importance will be the new government's plans for and the realization of the efforts to improve production and

exports in the growing energy sector. Although the energy sector was not considered to be the top priority of the new Five-Year Plan for the leaders, the party decrees provide evidence of the renewal of its development and the acknowledgement of its crucial importance.

The abundance of natural resources available in Soviet territory had the potential to be beneficial to the Soviet economy. The USSR was in possession of the majority of energy resources of all the nations represented by CMEA (the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance). However, production priorities fluctuated. Because of the remote locations of the resources, as well as the distance and difficulty required to transport them across the vast geographical territories, emphasis was often placed on less important resources, which negatively affected the revenue accumulated by the state. Several economists and historians expressed their concern over the low priority given to oil production as compared to other energy sources, reporting that this lack of long-term planning could eventually place undue strain on the economy, which in turn would be unable to handle the stress.[49] An inherent problem of the early 1980s was the leaders', especially Andropov's, concentration on short-term planning. Traditionally, the Soviet system had always operated on five-year plans. However, an industry as crucial as oil required a more hands-on approach as the potential to deplete resources without practical alternatives was a prospective hindrance. Chernenko was concerned with the energy sector but did not place the same weight on it as the Food Program. Party disunity combined with demographic issues created further tension in the already volatile

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[49] Robert Campbell, "Soviet Energy Policy and Plans" and Wolfgang Pfeiler, "Energy as a Factor of Soviet Power," *From Brezhnev to Gorbachev*, ed. Hans-Joachim Veen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984). 54-57 and 43-53.

economic community and affected the leaders' ability to direct attention toward divergent economic theories and propositions.[50]

Despite the apparent disagreements within the Party, official pleas for worker participation in all aspects of the fuel-energy sector intensified. It was recognized that the "thrifty and rational utilization of resources" was necessary and "efficient output production with less expenses" was the only manner through which this sector of the economy could succeed.[51] The comparison of the rational use of resources to the illogical short term planning presents a dichotomy in Soviet economic planning. On one hand, the government was aware that it was necessary to conserve resources and exploit them sparingly, but on the other, the Party ignored the faults present in the foundation of the five-year planning system. Because of the lack of long-term, substantive plans, policies, and goals, combined with the inherent obsession with the timely completion and over fulfillment of the five-year plans, the party neglected important aspects of the energy sector, such as gas production, while promoting others thus creating an even larger economic deficit. Oil and other energy industries were growing in importance for both consuming and producing countries all over the world. The Soviet government possessed valuable natural resources and with proper management and development, could conceivably reverse the negative economic effects of the late Brezhnev years.

Before the introduction of the Food Program and the intense drive to revitalize agriculture, a short-term plan was drafted for cautious and resourceful use of materials such as black and coloured metals, metal-wares, forests, and secondary materials

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[50] The primary demographic issue that plagued economic productivity was the lack of workers in crucial industrial and energy producing areas.

[51] KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh sezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK. Tom 14, 1981-1984, *Ob usilenii raboty po ekonomii i ratsionalnomy ispolzovaniiu syrevykh, toplivno-energeticheskikh i drugikh materialinykh resursov, 30 iiunia 1981*, (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1987), 175.

produced from these resources.[52] It was recognized that economic diversity was vitally linked to economic prosperity; thus, the interregnum leaders promoted especially the development of secondary and renewable resources. Regardless of this recognition, progress in the interregnum period was limited. The plan for 1985 "envisage[d] a guarantee of an almost 60% growth requirement in metal, fuel, and energy for the realistic cost of their expenses."[53] Presumably, if significant progress had been achieved in the prior period, the government would not have demanded such dramatic increases in production. The Soviet authorities under-invested in the energy sphere. The fact that in 1981, "50 percent of wares (with the exception of cardboard-paper production), that are derived from secondary raw materials or enterprises [...] remains under the administration of Soviet Ministers of union republics" accentuated Andropov's concern that economic prosperity was innately linked to the quality of the managerial personnel.[54] The improper distribution of authority throughout the republics was also exacerbated by poor management and corrupt activity. As a result, production levels would not reach their potential and the economic stability of the country would be further jeopardized. Arguably managerial issues combined with insufficient output (as demonstrated in the increased call for production in 1985), contributed significantly to the lack of success of the energy sector, and thus the overall economic prosperity of the Soviet Union.

During the Brezhnev period the main focus of the energy industry was the development of coal with an added emphasis by the leaders regarding the necessity to

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[52] Resheniia partii i pravitelstva po khoziaistvennym voprosom. Tom 14, *O merakh po obespecheniiu potrebnosti narodnogo khoziastva v ekonomichnykh vydakh tary v 1982-1985 godakh, 19 aprelia 1982*, 361.

[53] "Zasedaniia verkhovnogo soveta SSSR," *Izvestiia*, 29 noiabria 1984.

[54] Svod Zakonov SSSR. Tom 5, *O merakh po dalneishemu uluchsheniiu ispolzovaniia vtorichnogo syria v narodnom khoziaistve.. 25 ianvaria 1980*, 212.

conserve gas for the future. By the end of the 1970s, when production targets continued to fall short of their goals, party leaders reduced energy production targets which had two consequences: first, less pressure was placed on the energy sector to meet unrealistic production demands, and second, by having lower targets, the party was able to domestically propagate their successes when the more modest goals were attained. Even if the growth rate of the energy sector was not increasing at the spectacular rate of the past, five-year plan targets reflected more feasible figures which affected budgetary projections and prevented over-budgeting in this industry. The implementation of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan, changed production levels to such a degree that oil targets were set at the same levels as the Tenth, and coal targets had actually decreased from their 1980 targets.[55] In addition to poor performance in the oil sector, coal fell 74 million tons short of the low-range target for the Tenth Five-Year Plan: an enormous blow to the Soviet economy.[56] Because gas was the only energy source to attain its goals in the late Brezhnev period, it became more obvious to the government that the territories of Siberia would need to be quickly developed regardless of the cost and inconvenience in order to alleviate the energy burden on the country. Such development would entail a dramatic rise in investment that the industry was receiving. The development of Siberia and other territories would require increased investment in the short term but the government was beginning to realize the potential long-term benefits of these investments.

Official statistics demonstrate the government's diversion of investment from previous energy endeavours and a redirection of budgetary funds towards more profitable resources. Between 1980 and 1985, oil produced 4.4% less of total energy output and

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[55] Daniel Bond and Herbert Levine, "The Eleventh Five-Year Plan," *Russia at the Crossroads*, 94.
[56] Thane Gustafson, "Energy Policy: From Big Coal to Big Gas" in *Russia at the Crossroads, 123.*

coal produced a comparable 4% less whereas the production and exploitation of gas rose 8.7%.[57] This translated into an increase of 228.7 million tons of gas produced between the tenth and eleventh five-year plans. Of course, the shift away from coal production was not only related to increased demand for other energy resources. The working population of Siberia had been unable to support the coal industry and as such, it was short between 100 000 and 140 000 people needed for the workforce.[58] Thus, the energy industry became an increasing problem for the Soviet government. When western analysts examined the upcoming five-year plan in 1981, it was projected by some that energy investments would gain importance and reach a high of 36.7% to 37.6% of overall industrial investment.[59] When figures from the beginning of the Gorbachev period are examined, it becomes evident that the trend towards the development of gas and away from oil and coal continued and was poised to continue throughout the duration of the Twelfth Five-Year Plan.[60] Although the interregnum leaders did not emphasize the development of the energy sector to the same degree as the agro-industrial complex, statistics indicate an increased awareness of its potential benefits to the overall economy.

However, the energy sector failed to live up to expectation. This "failure" reflected the seemingly insurmountable obstacles the interregnum leaders faced. Not only did their physical illnesses raise questions about their governing abilities, but also their diverse backgrounds and lack of broad political support prevented large-scale progress from occurring. Their respectively short terms as General Secretary inhibited substantive improvement despite the possibilities that lay with CMEA programs and the

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[57] Narodnoe Khoziaistvo, 163.
[58] David Marples, *Chernobyl and Nuclear Power in the USSR* (Hampshire: The Macmillan Press, 1986), 39.
[59] Gustafson, "Energy Policy: From Big Coal to Big Gas" 127.
[60] Narodnoe Khoziaistvo, 163.

energy sector continued to perform badly. Technological weaknesses prevented the government from fully and expediently exploiting the many available resources. Because the Soviet Union lacked the proper technologies for basic production, many of these raw materials were under-exploited. The leaders recognized that a lack of technical expertise had inhibited the development of secondary raw materials.[61] Some reform of the energy sector did occur, however, and raw materials were increasingly seen as valuable and exhaustible. The gradual shift from the production of coal to other energy sources can also be viewed as a positive step in Soviet planning. By diverting attention towards valuable natural resources, the government began to increase the global position of the USSR while at the same time creating the potential to augment domestic income from these renewed resources. The administration at least recognized the dilemma and voiced the problems publicly, which marked a departure from the past.

V

The economy and the future prosperity of the Soviet Union was a prime focus for the interregnum leaders. Both Andropov and Chernenko recognized that in order for the USSR to continue to be a major player in global affairs, the economy needed new strategies in order to flourish and create revenue for the country. As has been demonstrated, the interregnum of 1982-1985 saw the reinvigoration of agriculture and the energy sector as well as other industries that have not been discussed in detail here. Official statistics demonstrated the growth in the agro-industrial complex in an effort to both reaffirm progress and encourage further development in this field. Although the growth rates were small they are indicative of an internal change and the leaders' desire

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[61] Svod zakonov SSSR. Tom 5, *O merakh po dalneishemu uluchsheniiu ispolzovaniia vtorichnogo syria v narodnom khoziaistve. 25 ianvaria 1980*, 211.

to reverse the economic slowdown of the previous decade. Each interregnum leader brought new priorities to the post of General Secretary, basing their programs on documents drafted in the last year of the Brezhnev regime. Some analysts maintain that "stagnation' continued until 1985. However, it is posited in this chapter that the interregnum leaders transformed the draft plans to produce tangible results across the country. The implementation of these plans, combined with improved results provided the foundation for economic reinvigoration in the Soviet Union.

The interregnum leaders faced many obstacles when they came to power, many of which could not be resolved because of their physical illnesses. Because the interregnum leaders died before they saw their policies come to fruition, most scholars disregard their effort to improve economic prosperity. As will be demonstrated in the following chapter, the reinvigoration of the economy, or any branch of the Soviet government/system for that matter, could not be achieved in isolation. Specifically, Andropov's new take on Brezhnev's cadres policy as well as his disciplinary campaign were intrinsically linked to the success of the economy. The restructuring of the Party provided the foundation from which economic and social change could occur. On the other hand, Chernenko would not have fought for his policies as vigorously had Andropov not made such significant structural changes to the Party. The interregnum leaders possessed different philosophies regarding the future direction of the Soviet Union. These differences confirm the theory that 1982-1985 experienced numerous changes and that these leaders were more than figureheads or men merely vying for personal power. The economy, in a number of sectors, adapted to the confusion induced by rapid succession, and to some extent

responded to the different initiatives of the leaders to promote economic expansion across the country.

**Chapter Two: Forgetting the Past: The Discipline and Anti-Corruption Campaigns and the Mini-Purges of Andropov and Chernenko**

Political patronage, as defined by John P. Willerton, is "an asymmetrical personal political relationship in which goods, services, and power itself are exchanged, with the power and influence of the members of patronage networks being interdependent."[1] This is precisely the atmosphere in which the Brezhnev leadership operated. Party members were able to succeed only if they had an amicable relationship with the General Secretary, and even then, a mutual understanding of expectations was required by both parties involved. In part, because of this phenomenon, one of the most prominent features of the Brezhnev era was the gerontocratic aspect of the Party leadership. For years, the composition of the upper echelons of the Party remained constant, with little vertical or lateral movement between positions. Exceptions to this phenomenon were Brezhnev's favourites who worked within the patronage networks and continued to gain prominence and power. Although this policy was favoured by Brezhnev and those who benefited from it, it created an atmosphere in which corruption, malaise, and complacency could fester. Party leaders and industry managers alike neglected their responsibilities and became consumed with the personal power and prestige that accompanied breaking the rules and working with the 'secondary economy.' The rapid successions of the interregnum period permitted a minor upheaval in party leadership and ended the political stagnation that encompassed the late 1970s. The personnel reforms, anti-corruption, and discipline campaigns instigated by Andropov and half-heartedly adopted by Chernenko were fundamentally linked to the stagnation of the economy. The

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[1] John P. Willerton, "Patronage Networks and Coalition Building in the Brezhnev Era," *Soviet Studies* 39, no. 2, April, 1987): 177.

reversal of many of the managerial policies of the Brezhnev regime denoted that 1982-85 was in fact a time of change to a greater or lesser degree.

Typically, throughout the history of the Soviet Union, party members slowly worked their way up to higher positions, usually through the assistance of their patrons. This process ultimately created a slow turnover rate in party membership, especially of those in more prominent positions. In the Brezhnev era, party leaders typically only left their posts upon death—virtually no one was fired or removed from office. Brezhnev's death created an atmosphere of uncertainty amongst Politburo and Central Committee members. Since Brezhnev did not appoint a successor in his declining years, political infighting became a prominent feature in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[2] The prospect of Andropov becoming the next General Secretary unsettled many leaders, as his background as KGB leader provided him with information and resources unavailable to the regular Party leader.[3] Also, as will be discussed in detail below, Andropov's ability to move quickly up the Party ranks after leaving the KGB was directly linked to his resources to disgrace many existing Party leaders and their families through his anti-corruption campaign. Conversely, the prospect of Chernenko becoming General Secretary, a man with close personal ties with Brezhnev, was more agreeable to many in the nomenklatura. Thus, when Andropov acquired the top position in the Party, observers, both Soviet and foreign, anticipated large-scale reforms for the CPSU.[4]

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[2] It should be noted that throughout the course of Soviet history, there was no tradition of succession. Upon the death of the General Secretary, a new leader was appointed without necessarily having a cordial personal connection to or relationship with the previous administration. This lack of policy created 'mini-crises' during each Soviet succession.

[3] Christian Schmidt-Hauer, *Gorbachev: The Path to Power* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co.), 84.

[4] In 1983, Seweryn Bialer predicted that "the odds [were] overwhelmingly in Andropov's favour that he will be able to consolidate his position beyond any challenge from his colleagues, that he will be able to purge personal opponents and opponents of his policies." Seweryn Bialer, "The Political System" in *After Brezhnev* ed., Robert F. Byrnes. (Bloomington: Indianna University Press, 1983), 44.

The aging leadership illuminated the problems with the Brezhnev administration. Some analysts have linked the burgeoning age of Party leaders and the security they enjoyed in their respective positions to the declining economy and lack of innovation in policy creation.[5] Because numerous Party officials had been in power for over a decade, their ability and desire to reinvigorate the existing party system was limited. Hence, the leadership continued its calls for increased production, but failed to present new formulas through which these goals could be attained. The link between aged leaders and lack of reforms is not necessarily new; however, the idea posited here is that Andropov saw corruption and permanence in office as *the* issues that prevented the Soviet Union from achieving radical economic progress and growth. As noted in Chapter One, Chernenko focused on economic reforms more than Andropov, who had different priorities. The Western press viewed Andropov as a potential reformer and Chernenko as a figurehead, when in fact, they both possessed reformist tendencies; they simply emphasized different priorities.[6] If one examines the history of the CPSU, it becomes evident that the leaders who exacted the greatest amount of change in Soviet society were also those who initiated reform in the beginning of their terms.[7] As such, the interregnum with its rapid succession provided the potentiality for large scale personnel reform and the reinvigoration of the Communist Party.

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[5] Zhores Medvedev, *Andropov* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1983), 127; Timothy J. Colton, "What Ails the Soviet System?" *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 35, no 3 (1984): 22.

[6] Elizabeth Teague, "Signs of Rivalry between Andropov and Chernenko," *Radio Free Europe*, May 25, 1982; Elizabeth Teague, "Andropov and Chernenko: Who's Ahead?" *Radio Free Europe,* August 30 1982; Elizabeth Teague "Andropov's First Hundred Days: Domestic Policy," *Radio Free Europe,* February 21, 1983; etc.

[7] According to Erik P. Hoffman, Brezhnev dismissed Khrushchev's programs and leadership styles when he came to power and this author believes that Andropov has managed to do the same thing. Erik P. Hoffman, "Soviet Politics in the 1980s," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 35, no 3 (1984): 228. One can also make the same observation regarding Khrushchev's approach to the leadership following the lengthy and turbulent years of Joseph Stalin.

The gerontocratic leadership and the stagnating economy can also be related to increased corruption and lack of discipline in all sectors of Soviet life. Government officials became more corrupt as they realized few consequences would result from illegal activities. This caused a "trickle down" effect in other levels of management. As will be discussed below, the 'second economy' or black market became more prevalent in the later Brezhnev years and had a direct effect on discipline and production in many factories and workplaces. Andropov's desire to reinvigorate the Party was directly connected to his anti-corruption, anti-discipline campaigns, and his drive for increased efficiency at all levels of management, whether national, regional, or otherwise. The fact that a Party member and KGB chairman such as Andropov, with little direct Party support, possessed the power to initiate these campaigns before becoming General Secretary indicated that his term would be distinctly different from that of his predecessor or any of his potential competitors. Andropov's anti-corruption drive, combined with his ambitions prompted him to inaugurate a very different style of leadership with real potential for reform. The restructuring of the Party indicated a revival in enthusiasm for change and allowed the leaders to explore different avenues for the recovery of the economy.

In this chapter, the personnel policies of the interregnum leaders as well as the developments in leadership of the late Brezhnev period will be examined in order to question the theory of prolonged stagnation until 1985. By examining the individual changes in Party personnel during this period one can deduce the relationship between economic reform and the new leadership team. Documents indicate that the interregnum experienced two series of personnel changes which demonstrate a sharp disconnect

between the leaders. Documents, official speeches, and newspaper articles indicate each leader's purpose as distinct from his predecessor and intrinsically linked to his previous personal experiences in the party. The specific replenishment of personnel reflects the personal initiative of the General Secretary as well as the consolidation of his power. Andropov's discipline and corruption campaigns were unequivocally connected to both the flagging economy and the need to revive party fortunes. The contrast of these reforms to the Brezhnev and to some degree Chernenko periods provides historians with evidence that Andropov planned to restructure the entire hierarchy but was unable to do so because of his short term in power.[8] This chapter will present the interregnum period as one of reformist tendencies within the Party, as the leaders attempted to secure their positions and combat the growing complacency and inertia apparent in positions of power from the rural to the national level.

I

Leonid Brezhnev's prolonged term as General Secretary provided him with the opportunity to inundate the Party with his supporters and create an atmosphere of security and stability in the nomenklatura. Brezhnev's lengthy tenure gave him ample time to designate and prepare his chosen successor to ensure that no succession crisis arose. However, he did not do so. While Brezhnev may have favoured some Party members over others, a clear successor had not been chosen when he died in November 1982. The eighteen years Brezhnev spent in office increased the possibility of party stagnation and more autocratic rule. As the leadership became older, complacency and participation in 'illegal' or 'inappropriate' activities increased. While a stable political environment was

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[8] George W. Breslauer, "The Nature of Soviet Politics and the Gorbachev Leadership," in *The Gorbachev Era* ed., Alexander Dallin and Condoleezza Rice (Stanford: Stanford Alumni Association, 1986): 18.

created, economically, the effects of growing 'secondary' activities became progressively more noticeable. The General Secretary's personal adoration of medals, ceremonies, and awards paralleled his desire to constantly promote his cadres to more prominent positions, regardless of their qualifications. The phenomenon of unqualified personnel in positions of power was not new to the Soviet Union; however, Brezhnev's cadres policy rarely allowed for the demotion or removal of a Party official even in the most extenuating circumstances.[9]

In contrast to Khrushchev's frequent changes of cadres and decentralized decision-making policies in the early 1960s, Brezhnev implemented policies to ensure his cadres' positions for the duration of his term.[10] In part, this policy augmented his popularity within the Party and prompted Soviet officials to find comfort in their positions and not fear for their political careers. However, it also promoted permissiveness within the Party which in turn, led to corruption, lack of discipline, and egotism in Party leaders that filtered through other elements of the country. Because of this, the Brezhnev era experienced a drop in Party membership turnover with the majority of changes occurring only upon a member's death. The slow turnover rate of the Brezhnev leadership indicated that not only was the leadership stagnant but it was aging at an increasingly fast rate. Whereas at the Twenty-Fifth Party Congress in 1976 the majority of the members were between the age of thirty-six and fifty, the Twenty-Sixth

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[9] The later career of Aleksei Kosygin was an exception to Brezhnev's cadres policy. Brezhnev opposed his economic reforms put forth in 1965 and continued to refute his political endeavours until Kosygin was forced to retire from his position as Premier as well as from the Politburo. See John W. Parker, *Kremlin in Transition* (Boston: Unwin Hyman,1991).

[10] During his term as General Secretary, Khrushchev split the Party into industrial and agricultural factions. Although this was supported by the Central Committee it created great tension among Party members. Khrushchev also implemented a policy that regulated Party members' positions in an attempt to avoid leadership similar to Stalin's—one with men that had been in power for up to twenty or thirty years. See William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003): 523-5, 587, etc.

Party Congress of 1981 experienced an increase in the age group of fifty-one to sixty.[11] Conversely, the majority of members at the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress fell between the ages of thirty and fifty.[12] The year 1986 was used in this study to demonstrate the degree of change that occurred during the Eleventh Five-Year Plan. Although the majority of these personnel changes happened during Gorbachev's first year in power, it is important to note that the foundations for these changes were laid under Andropov. More significant is the increase in members over the age of sixty between 1976 and 1981, as well as the decrease in members under fifty in the same period.[13] These figures demonstrate that between the two Party Congresses new members were not being introduced; rather existing members continued to languish in their current positions.

Since the Party Congresses were comprised of a diverse group of members, it is important to examine specific areas of the Party and Soviet government to better understand the age demographic of the Party leadership. Arguably, the most important body within the Central Committee of the CPSU, the Politburo, had a particularly high average age. In 1981, the average age of full Politburo members was seventy and candidate members were only slightly younger at sixty-six.[14] Conversely, the average age of the Central Committee members was approximately sixty-two, with candidate members on average fifty-seven years.[15] Brezhnev's trust in cadres policy established a leadership composed of an aging generation, increasingly unfamiliar with changing

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[11] T. H. Rigby, "Old Style Congress—New Style Leadership?" *Gorbachev at the Helm. A New Era in Soviet Politics?* ed., Miller, Miller and Rigby (London: Croom Helm, 1987) Table 1.1, 18.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid. It should be noted that the largest difference in age between the Party Congress occurred in the thirty-six to fifty range where a drop of 8% occurred. Also, the largest increase was in the fifty-one to sixty age group which grew by 6%.
[14] Jerry Hough, "Changes in Soviet Elite Composition," *Russia at the Crossroads. The 26th Congress of the CPSU* ed., Seweryn Bialer and Thane Gustafson (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982): Table 2.1, 41.
[15] J. H. Miller, "How Much of a New Elite?" *Gorbachev at the Helm, A New Era in Soviet Politics?* ed., R. F. Miller, J. H. Miller and T. H. Rigby. (London: Croom Helm, 1987), Table 3.3, 72.

technologies and demands within the Soviet Union. How did the age of the Party leadership correlate with political and economic stagnation across the USSR? In early 1982, a party document indicated that Brezhnev wanted "better use of primary party organization for proper control of administrative activities"; however, it appears that no actions were taken to accomplish this task.[16] A few years earlier, a decree on economic issues demanded more emphasis on managerial efficiency.[17] Combined, these documents lead scholars to believe that while the government was aware of shortcomings at different managerial levels, it was unable to make the necessary amendments.[18]

There were various consequences of Brezhnev's cadres program. It allowed Soviet officials a high degree of leniency in their daily activities and especially managerial tasks. Without fear for their positions or Party status, officials and managers alike progressively participated in the secondary economy which further promoted corruption at all levels of the public life. It has been estimated that by the end of Brezhnev's term, approximately 80% of the Soviet population, including government and party officials, were engaged in illegal activities primarily based in the second economy.[19] Although this number may not be entirely accurate, it can be assumed that a large majority of Soviet officials were involved in activities outside their official duties.

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[16] KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh sezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK. Tom 14, 1981-1984, *Postanovlenie TsK KPSS o komissiiakh pervichnykh partiinykh organizatsii po osushchestvleniiu kontrolia deiatelnosti administratsii i za rabotoi apparata, 16 fevraliia 1982* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politcheskoi literatury, 1987), 241. This document indicates that Brezhnev, at least nominally, recognized that the Party bureaucracy was becoming progressively more out of touch with lower levels of government and the ways in which they managed their departments and subsidiaries.

[17] Resheniia partii i pravitelstva po khoziastvennym voprosom. Tom 13, Aprel 1979-Mart 1981, *O merakh po dalneishemu uluchsheniiu raboty organov narodnogo kontrolia i usileniiu partiinogo rukovodstva imi v sviazi s priniatiem zakona o narodnom kontrole v SSSR, 17 ianvaria 1980*, (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1981), 264.

[18] Donald R. Kelly, *Soviet Politics from Brezhnev to Gorbachev* (New York, Praeger, 1987), 9-10. Kelly states the Party was unwilling to apply sanctions against officials who resisted any change in their methods of work and management. Also see Parker, *Kremlin in Transition,* 30 and 153.

[19] William A. Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1993), 74.

The bureaucratic mechanisms and industrial production targets that perennially affected the economic system frequently prevented ordinary citizens and officials from obtaining necessary consumer goods, thereby forcing them to actively participate in the black market. The black market allowed the Soviet government to circumvent the lack of consumer goods, which had never been a Soviet priority. The combination of increased dependency on the second economy and a lack of cadres regeneration escalated in the late 1970s.

Growing corruption and the lowering of labour productivity in the factories and Party did not go unnoticed by the General Secretary. However, Brezhnev appeared to condone these activities as a normal element of bureaucracy that would have little to no effect on other aspects of the economy, society, or government. According to James Millar, Brezhnev's 'Little Deal' (as the growing apathy toward corruption was labelled) tolerated "the expansion of a wide range of petty private economic activities, some legal, some in the penumbra (partial shadow) of the legal, and some clearly illegal, the primary aim of which was the reallocation by private means of a significant fraction of Soviet national income according to private preferences."[20] Since these activities reallocated a portion of the national income, they undoubtedly affected the global economic position of the Soviet Union which, in turn, shaped the quality of life of the ordinary Soviet citizen. However, these effects were not always negative. Without the existence of the shadow economy, Soviet citizens would not have had access to many consumer goods, which they both desired and required. Thus, the 'Little Deal' provided a mechanism through which the government could avoid large-scale economic reforms while ensuring the

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[20] James R. Millar, "The Little Deal: Brezhnev's Contribution to Acquisitive Socialism," *Slavic Review* 44, no. 4 (Winter, 1985): 697.

population had access to goods and services that reduced the increasing consumer demands on the official producers.[21] Many Soviet citizens actively participated in the second economy thereby profiting personally from its existence. Because it became so widespread over a relatively short period of time, even if the state had preferred not to participate in 'illegal' activities, it would have been unable to completely eradicate the second economy and increase official production in state run factories until a stronger leader, like Mikhail Gorbachev, came to power. Despite the allegations against his daughter and his own personal compliance with increased corruption, the Brezhnev government's failure to remedy this growing problem symbolized his compliance with its existence.

Not all members of the government and Party agreed with the 'official stance' toward official and private corruption. A growing factionalism within the Party became evident as Brezhnev approached his final years as General Secretary and the future stability of the CPSU membership became increasingly unclear. Throughout 1982, the foreign media commented repeatedly on the "race for power" that had emerged between Andropov and Chernenko.[22] As a non-Secretariat member of the Central Committee since his promotion to head of the KGB in 1967, Andropov did not appear to be vigorously pursuing Brezhnev's position, rather he remained, to a certain degree, distant from current politics and established a group of men willing to support his quest to purge the party of corrupt elements and patronage style of leadership evident in Chernenko's growing role in the Party. His departure from the KGB signalled his true intent of

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[21] Ibid., 701.
[22] Elizabeth Teague, "Andropov and Chernenko," *Radio Free Europe* August 30 1982.

gaining control of the Party upon Brezhnev's death.[23] Chernenko, on the other hand, continued to support Brezhnev and his policies while developing a secure power base composed of existing Politburo members. Increasing factionalism within the upper echelons of the Party was amplified by Andropov's daring campaign to alleviate corruption. In part, this adventurous program was due to his personal background in the KGB and his earlier initiative to restructure the institution thereby making it a more efficient and better operating unit. However, because his initial drive against corruption was aimed at Party members closely linked to the General Secretary the campaign may have been part of his overall plan to take control of the Party upon Brezhnev's death.

Andropov demonstrated his dedication to efficient management early in his career with the KGB. As early as 1972, Andropov and his allies, including Eduard Shevardnadze, Georgian Minister for Internal Affairs, managed to remove long time first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party, Vasilii Mzhavanadze from his post.[24] It was alleged that Mzhavanadze and his wife had engaged in bribe taking and participated heavily in the black market. When it was discovered that firearms were being produced underground with the Georgian leader's approval, Andropov convinced Brezhnev to remove Mzhavanadze and replace him with Andropov's ally Shevardnadze.[25] In this way, Andropov began to solidify his position across different parts of the Soviet Union, advancing his supporters to prominent and important political positions. A second

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[23] In the spring of 1982, Andropov began to position himself for a promotion to the Central Committee arguing that the governing body needed an experienced member like himself, especially since the death of Suslov. Despite Suslov's close association with Brezhnev, in his memoirs, Gorbachev states that he and Suslov had fostered a relationship when they both worked in Stavropol. Additionally, Gorbachev argues that upon Suslov's death, Gromyko supported Andropov as a candidate for the newly available second position in the Party. Parker, *Kremlin in Transition,* 100-101.

[24] Before becoming First Secretary of Georgia, Shevardnadze was First Secretary of Tbilisi regional party, and had worked in Georgia for years. Mzhavanadze had been First Secretary of the Communist Party of Georgia from 1953 until his demotion in 1972.

[25] William Clark, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Official,* 154.

example is Andropov's attack on Sergei Medunov, Krasnodar party boss and a close associate of Brezhnev. In July 1982, Medunov was removed from his post for permitting extremely high levels of illicit activity in the Krasnodar region.[26] Again, Andropov asserted his power in the KGB and slowly dismantled Brezhnev's 'trust in cadres' policy and weakened the General Secretary's power base. Perhaps most infamous, is the scandal involving Galina Churbanova (née Brezhneva) and Boris Buriatia (the Gypsy). In January 1982, Boris the Gypsy was arrested in connection with alleged stolen tsarist diamonds and subsequently implicated Brezhnev's daughter in the scandal.[27] Although Galina Churbanova was not charged with any illegal activities, the fact that the KGB was able to investigate the General Secretary's daughter spoke volumes about its growing authority and power throughout the CPSU. In this way, Andropov forced Brezhnev either to defend or abandon his associates and become more vigilant regarding his own political position and affiliations. In response, Brezhnev increased Chernenko's responsibilities within the Party and, even if inadvertently, increased Party factionalism and competition regarding the impending succession struggle.

II

As has been discussed briefly above, Andropov provided the upper echelons of the Party with a distinct approach to the leadership. When he became General Secretary, Party members were practically forced to comply with his personnel and corruption policies or risk losing their positions. Although it has been argued that "Brezhnev, in his declining years, and moved by his illness, began to prepare consciously Andropov in the role of his successor," and that the latter "was one of Brezhnev's closest comrades in

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[26] Ibid., 172.
[27] Ibid., 181.

arms," the above evidence supports the theory that, in fact, Andropov was working against his predecessor.[28] Following his accession, Andropov made his visions known to the Party and the Soviet people. In his first speech at the Central Committee Plenum in November 1982, he stated,

> Today it is crucially important and necessary that every working man and woman realizes that the fulfillment of the plan depends on their own labour contribution as well, that everyone understands the simple truth that the better we work, the better we live. As Lenin emphasized, the wider the scope of our plans and our production tasks, the "greater the numbers of people who should be drawn by the millions to independent participation in these tasks."[29]

In this statement he was not only addressing the general working population of the Soviet Union. He was also warning existing and future party members that the new General Secretary did not intend to continue with the policies and precedents set by his predecessor.

Although Andropov and Chernenko competed for Brezhnev's position, when the decision to make Andropov the new General Secretary was made, Chernenko had no choice but to stand behind the Party's selection. He frequently supported the discipline and anti-corruption campaigns in his speeches as second secretary. In his report at a plenary meeting of the CPSU entitled "Topical Questions of the Party's Ideological and Mass Political Work" he stated, "The strengthening of discipline is not a short-lived campaign but implies daily painstaking work. And success is ensured when taking direct part in it are not only the management, but all working people, when it relies on the

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[28] A. M. Aleksandrov-Agentov. *Ot Kollontai do Gorbachev* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnoe Otnosheniia, 1984), 266 and 264.

[29] Iurii Andropov, "Rech generalnogo sekretaria TsK KPSS na plenume TsK KPSS, 22noiabria 1982," *Materialy plenuma Tsentralnogo komiteta KPSS* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politcheskoi literatury, 1982), 22.

experience, consciousness and civic activity of the masses."[30] Perhaps as a means of smoothing the succession he also publicly stated that "All members of the Politburo," thereby including himself, "believe that Iurii Vladimirovich fully grasps the Brezhnev style of leadership, Brezhnev's concerns about the interests of the people, and his attitude to the cadres resolution."[31] Although this second statement was given on the occasion of Andropov's promotion and before Brezhnev's funeral which was held 15 November 1982, it lacks impartiality, as do most Soviet officials' speeches, Chernenko clearly hoped that Brezhnev's cadres policy would be continued despite Andropov's previous, and very public, attacks against prominent Party members and their associates.

Despite the fact that Chernenko publicly supported Andropov, the two leaders maintained their own factions. Andropov's greatest support came from younger and newer members at the upper levels of the CPSU. According to Gorbachev, one of Andropov's closest associates, "[Andropov] resolutely denounced all the features commonly associated with Brezhnevism, that is, protectionism, in-fighting and intrigues, corruption, moral turpitude, bureaucracy, disorganization and laxity."[32] As a man with growing prominence within the Party, the juxtaposition of Gorbachev's political position as compared to Chernenko's provides insight into the growing factionalism within the Communist Party as well as both the barriers and support systems that hindered Andropov's long term goals. Thus, with his supporters in both the Party and the KGB, Andropov "without delay, used the information that he had at his disposal, having been chairman of the KGB" and began his measures to impose discipline and eradicate

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[30] Konstantin Chernenko, "Topical Questions of the Party's Ideological and Mass Political Work, June 14 1983," *Speeches and Writings*, 5th ed. (Oxford: Pergamon, 1984), 176.
[31] Konstantin Chernenko, "Rech na vneocherednom plenume TsK KPSS, 12 noiabria 1982," *Izbrannye rechi i stati* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1984), 557.
[32] Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 153.

corruption on a large scale.[33] When Andropov made his intentions known, the government and party newspapers began supporting his endeavours and reporting the campaign's successes across the Soviet Union. New and frank statistics were published, and the Soviet people were made aware of the problems in society. In early 1983, it was reported that "the loss of workers' time from absences and standing idle, is far from overcome. In 1982, 740 man days, or the equivalent of the output of two or three machines was lost because of worker absences."[34] The campaigns against corruption and discipline cannot be examined in isolation. The overall productivity of factories was inherently linked to the success of the second economy and vice-versa. Thus, when Andropov called for stricter discipline amongst workers, he also advocated that the managers of these factories and workers comply with the rules and regulations set by the state—and not the previously upheld "policy" that turned a blind eye to the shadow economy.

Not only did the General Secretary make his views known to his fellow Party members, but the general public was constantly reminded of the plans to increase efficiency in all facets of society through the official press. In February 1983, *Izvestiia* reported that Andropov's speech "was not merely about the struggle with lateness, absenteeism, attending work while drunk, and other similar negative occurrences" but that it also had an increased emphasis on the "long-term development of socialist competition and the movement toward a more communist attitude of work."[35] This new disciplinary policy focused not only on improving the overall quality of Soviet society, but also directly focused on economic performance across the country. An April 1983

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[33] Aleksandrov-Agentov, *Ot Kollontai do Gorbacheva,* 278.
[34] "Chem luchshe rabotaem, tem luchshe zhiviot," *Izvestiia,* 10 fevraliia 1983, 2.
[35] "Krepit distsiplinu truda! Delo bsekh, delo kazhdogo," *Izvestiia,* 18 fevraliia 1983, 2-4.

document indicates that "one of the important tasks of management in party and Soviet organs appears to be placing strict order and discipline in observance with contractual obligations by the producers and suppliers—it is one of the decisive conditions for the successful realization of the party course for the intensive development of the economy and its increased effectiveness."[36] Andropov's harsh statements in the press reminded the Soviet people that the new General Secretary seriously desired to improve the overall functioning of the Soviet system and change the attitude of the population towards their government and their workplaces.

Certain aspects of Andropov's new campaigns had the potential to decrease his popularity with the Soviet population. At the peak of the campaign, people were encouraged to report absentee workers and the police increasingly conducted searches at queues to discourage people from standing in lines for goods instead of reporting to work.[37] Although this policy did encourage increased productivity, it did not take into account the fact that people could not always obtain goods and services outside regular business hours and thus, were forced to queue in order to purchase everyday goods. In this way, Andropov's disciplinary campaign was flawed, and while production managers and low-level officials may have complied with the new rules and regulations, ordinary workers continued to be forced to choose between attending work and obtaining vital goods for their families. Andropov was not the only advocate of this program. Chernenko continued to support these policies despite their unpopularity across the country, most likely out of duty to the General Secretary and the security of his position

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[36] Resheniia partii i pravitelstva po khoziastvennym voprosom. Tom 15, chast 1, ianvariia 1983-mai 1984, *O serioznykh nedostatkakh v sobliudenii dogovornykh obiazatelstv po postavkam produktsii i pobyshenii otvetstvennosti ministerstv, vedomstv i predpriiatii v etom dele, 11 aprelia 1983* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politcheskoi literatura, 1985), 76.

[37] Donald R. Kelly, *Soviet Politics from Brezhnev to Gorbachev,* 79.

within the hierarchy. At the Central Committee meeting in June, 1983, Chernenko reaffirmed the campaign against "drunkenness, hooliganism, parasitism, speculation, theft of social property, bribe-taking, and money grubbing."[38] Chernenko's support for the program, although not as strong as Andropov's, did not waver during his term as second secretary. Notably, Chernenko abandoned the anti-corruption and discipline campaigns once he gained control of the Party. This shift suggests that Chernenko desired a break from the policies of his predecessors before he gained control but he lacked authority to change or moderate the harsh measures.

Andropov's discipline and anti-corruption campaigns were a precursor to the personnel changes he wanted to exact within the Party. The aforementioned campaigns against some of Brezhnev's closest associates consolidated Andropov's personal position within the Party. Because he was able to rid the party of several corrupt officials while Brezhnev was still alive, he was better poised to assert his independence and exact changes once power was transferred over to him. Without the vigorous campaigns against an inefficient economy and population, Andropov would not have had justification for purging the Party of unproductive and corrupt members. Andropov did not adhere to the system of political patronage like his predecessor, which created more social mobility within lower levels of the government. For example, although Iegor Ligachev was promoted and favoured by Andropov, the two did not meet until February 1983.[39] Andropov wanted to choose his fellow leaders based on their qualifications rather than their long-standing ties with high ranking Party members. It was recognized

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[38] Alfred Evans Jr., "The Decline of Developed Socialism? Some Trends in Recent Soviet Ideology," *Soviet Studies* 38, no. 1 (Jan., 1986): 17.

[39] Yegor Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 5. According to Ligachev, he and Andropov met for the first time in February 1983 and Ligachev was promoted the following April.

during the interregnum that the extraordinarily slow turnover rate of the Brezhnev period hindered the development of the USSR on a large scale. Andropov's new approach to governing the country prompted the reexamination and restructuring of the Party apparatus and high-level managers.

The advent of Andropov incited the largest turnover in official personnel since the Khrushchev period. For the first time in almost twenty years, party members and factory managers were aware of the vulnerability of their positions and the severe consequences that could result from failure. The new General Secretary wasted no time and began his personnel reforms at the Central Committee Plenum, 22 November 1982, a few days after Brezhnev's death. His first changes included the election of Gaidar Aliev as a candidate member of the Politburo, Nikolai Ryzhkov to the Central Committee Secretariat in charge of economic affairs, and the removal of a close ally of Brezhnev, Andrei Kirilenko, from his duties in both the Politburo and Central Committee Secretariat for 'reasons of health'.[40] This was a bold step for a leader so new to his position who faced a heightened degree of factionalism and potential opposition. As Andropov's term progressed, more alterations occurred to the central organs of the Party leadership. Not all of these changes transpired because of Andropov's desire to reinvigorate the Party. Within ten months of his taking office Tikhon Kiselev, Arvid Pelshe, and Sharaf Rashidov died, creating additional opportunities for Andropov to advance his supporters into the upper tier of leadership.[41]

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[40] A. D. Chernev, *229 Kremlevskikh Vozhdei* (Moscow: Rodina Russion, 1996), 55.

[41] Kiselev, First Secretary of the Belorussian Communist Party, died 11 January 1983; Pelshe, Committee for Party Control and Politburo member, died on 29 May 1983; and Rashidov, First Secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party, died on 31 October 1983. In addition to these men Ustinov died during Andropov's term—December 26, 1984. A. D. Chernaev, *229 Kremlevskikh vozhdei*, 55.

The overall personnel turnover rate during the Andropov period was quite substantial. According to Christian Schmidt-Haüer, nineteen out of eighty-four ministers, 20 percent of regional party leaders, and several Central Committee members were replaced, excluding the nine high-ranking Brezhnevites who lost their position during these thirteen months.[42] When the members of the leading organs of the Party present at the 27th Party Congress are examined, the changes exacted by the new leader can be inferred. Andropov admitted three members to full membership of the Politburo, one member to the Central Committee and two members to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, and one as a candidate member of the Politburo.[43] Appointment to full voting member of the Politburo is arguably of most importance here. Andropov promoted Aliev immediately after gaining power as was previously mentioned and Vitalii Vorotnikov and Mikhail Solomentsev at the December 1983, Central Committee Plenum.[44] Surprisingly, Andropov was able to exact numerous changes within the upper echelons of the Party which enabled him to further his campaigns against corruption and poor discipline.

The personnel changes in the Party during Andropov's brief term in power can be classified as a "mini purge". However, his deteriorating physical condition restricted his ability to enforce long-term reforms in the Soviet Union. As such, many of the promoted members of the Andropov leadership came to the fore again under the more revolutionary term of Mikhail Gorbachev. Of Gorbachev's twelve member Politburo, the three adopted under Andropov remained. Also, of the five members appointed to the Politburo within

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[42] Christian Schmidt-Hauer, *Gorbachev: The Path to Power,* 88.
[43] T H Rigby, "Old Style Congress—New Style Leadership?" Table 1.5, 23.
[44] A. D. Chernev, *229 Kremlevskikh vozhdei*, 55. Of a total of thirteen full politburo members, Andropov promoted three of them, or 25%.

Gorbachev's first year, three had become prominent during the Andropov era.[45] The close relationship between Andropov and Gorbachev becomes more evident when one examines the personnel favoured by both leaders during their terms as General Secretary. Politburo membership confirmed the reformist tendencies of the leaders and reinforced their position. By ensuring that Party members at various levels of government supported the ideals upheld by the General Secretary, Andropov put together a team attuned to his new policies.

Within thirteen months, Andropov reinvigorated the Communist Party and transformed the methods through which officials managed their respective departments. His campaigns against corruption and poor discipline were intrinsically linked to the mini-purge that occurred in the Party during this time. The Soviet economy also directly benefited from these managerial and policy changes. With better leaders and managers, factories and other establishments more effectively utilized their resources and man hours thereby increasing overall production as well as the GNP of the USSR.[46] It has been estimated that during the Andropov period 20% of top officials in the government lost their positions in addition to 40% of leading members of the state committees.[47] Andropov and his associates believed that far too many people were employed in unnecessary positions and served only to drain the state of its income. In fact, Andropov stated on 15 June 1983, "I am convinced that the staffs of many institutions and organizations could be reduced considerably without harm to the running of business. The personnel released could easily find jobs where now we have a manpower

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[45] A. D. Chernev, *229 kremlevskikh vozhdei,* 58 These members were Ryzhkov, Ligachev, and Chebrikov.
[46] See Chapter One of this work for an examination of economic progress during the interregnum.
[47] Thane Gustafson, "The Andropov Accession," *Soviet Politics in the 1980s* ed., Helmut Sonnenfeldt. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 11.

shortage."[48] As will be demonstrated below, Andropov's perspective on the efficient operation of government systems differed greatly from both his predecessor and successor and thus, illuminates the distinct trends of his period in office.

III

Konstantin Chernenko faced numerous problems upon Andropov's death in February, 1984. Not only was the new General Secretary experiencing health problems, but he was also confronted with the policy alterations put forth by his predecessor that had moved away from the previous twenty years of Communist Party policy under Brezhnev. However, Andropov's reforms did not have time to be fully implemented. Chernenko, who was closely associated with Brezhnev and his policies, continued to receive support from older, experienced members of the Party. Over the year Andropov controlled the Party he managed to remove many of Chernenko's supporters, but did not completely eradicate the pro-Brezhnev sentiment of Party leaders. In his speech at the Extraordinary Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Chernenko stated:

> [Andropov] passed away at the very height of great and tense work aimed at accelerating the development of the national economy, and at overcoming the difficulties which our country encountered at the turn of the eighties....Continuing and further advancing by collective efforts, the work started under the leadership of Iurii Andropov is the best way of paying tribute to his memory, of ensuring continuity in politics.[49]

This statement, and others like it in this speech, demonstrates Chernenko's inability to enforce his personal desires within the Party because the factionalism that resulted from the power struggle between the two interregnum leaders continued to exist and many of Andropov's appointees now had prominent positions.

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[48] Iurii Andropov, "Speech at a Plenary Meeting of the CPSU CC, 15 June 1983," *Speeches and Writings* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1983), 349/50.

[49] Konstantin Chernenko, "Speech at the Extraordinary Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the CPSU, 13 February 1984," *Speeches and Writings,* 2nd ed., 216.

The Chernenko period focused on increasing economic production and the prosperity of the Soviet Union by conventional means. He did not view managerial issues to be at the crux of the slowed economic growth and thus intended to revert to Brezhnev's "trust in cadres" program throughout his term. However, the personnel reforms enacted by Andropov inhibited such a course. Shortly after Chernenko's appointment as leader, *Izvestiia* reported that the General Secretary believed "there were still great excesses [in the government], which frequently create bureaucratic obstructions during times of urgent importance. But at this time, the high level managerial apparatus will remain untouched."[50] This statement exemplifies the difficulty of Chernenko's position. His personal experience in the Communist Party, combined with his close personal relationship with Brezhnev, directly influenced his style of work. Chernenko tolerated a greater degree of managerial inefficiency than his predecessor, who spent years restructuring the internal organs of the state security system before he tackled the structure of the Communist Party itself.

The Chernenko period of the interregnum reinstated stability in the political and managerial organs of both the upper levels of the Party and the subordinate roles of managers across the Soviet Union. Whereas Andropov's leadership led to major changes in party membership, Chernenko's term returned to the status quo. Between February 1984 and March 1985, the party leadership experienced only one significant change. On December 20, 1984, Dmitri Ustinov, voting Politburo member and Minister of Defense, died and was replaced by Sergei Sokolov who later became a candidate Politburo member under Mikhail Gorbachev. Ustinov's death did not prove to be beneficial to the Chernenko segment of the Party. It can be inferred from Sokolov's continued

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[50] "Namechennoe partei-vypolnim," *Izvestiia,* 13 aprelia 1984.

ascendancy under Gorbachev that he, to some degree, supported the Andropov-Gorbachev faction of the Party and as the new Minister of Defense, proved a faithful advocate of Gorbachev's more conciliatory policy toward the West, despite his rather limited past party experience. In part, Sokolov's limited experience allowed Chernenko to exploit him as defense minister without presenting him as an old Brezhnevite, willing to simply follow Party line.[51] The only addition to the leading bodies of the Communist Party under Chernenko was to the Supreme Soviet.[52] As well as making only two major changes to the leading Party organs, Chernenko decelerated the intensity of many of Andropov's managerial reforms.

At Chernenko's first Plenum of the Central Committee as General Secretary in April 1984, he paid homage to his predecessor stating that he "could not go around the problem of reducing the size of the administrative apparatus."[53] Initially, he continued strict managerial policies to enhance the efficiency of Soviet industry. Thus, although he adhered closely to many of Brezhnev's principles of governing, he wholeheartedly supported certain aspects of Andropov's philosophy as well. For example, in an article written in 1984, Chernenko reaffirmed that it was necessary "to promote organization in order to strengthen discipline in production of all aspects of management, as well as in all general aspects of our lives and activities."[54] Arguably, Chernenko maintained this aspect of Andropov's policy because of its accepted attainments and corresponding increases in overall economic production. Chernenko was by far the more economically

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[51] Kelly, *Soviet Politics from Brezhnev to Gorbachev,* 149.
[52] T. H. Rigby, "Old Style Congress—New Style Leadership?" *Gorbachev at the Helm,* Table 1.5, 23.
[53] Konstantin Chernenko, "Rech generalnogo sekretaria TsK KPSS tovarishcha K. U. Chernenko," *Materialy Plenuma Tsentralnogo Komiteta KPSS* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1984), 10.
[54] K. U. Chernenko, *Na uroven trebovanii razitogo sotsializma: Nekotorye aktualnye problemy teorii, strategii i taktiki KPSS* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1984), 20.

oriented of the two interregnum leaders and was more willing to continue with certain reforms instigated by Andropov insofar as they coincided with his own economic policies.

The vigour with which Andropov attacked corruption both during and after Brezhnev's tenure, put the careers of many Brezhnevites in jeopardy. Chernenko's close relationship with Brezhnev thus placed him in a precarious position. Hence, Chernenko "contrived…not to sully his own reputation with corruption" despite the degree to which it existed around him.[55] Had Chernenko involved himself in the second economy or any other corrupt activities, it would be a fair assumption to conjecture that Andropov would have removed him from his position as he had with many other Party members close to Brezhnev. Chernenko's conscious attempt to distance himself from the corrupt elements of the leadership was reflected during his term as General Secretary. Nevertheless, throughout 1984, official publications regarding government corruption campaigns significantly lessened. Of particular importance here is the drastically reduced frequency of these sorts of publications in *Izvestiia* and *Pravda.* Whereas during Andropov's term many speeches as well as general articles by journalists addressed the growing second economy and the means to eradicate it, articles from the Chernenko period scarcely acknowledge that corruption was a problem in the country. Newspapers from 1984-1985 focused more on practical problems continuously present in the economy as well as foreign relations in the Cold War. The virtual disappearance of the anti-corruption campaign indicates Chernenko's reluctance to adopt this aspect of the Andropov reforms.

Yet although Brezhnev also largely ignored growing corruption while in power, his and Chernenko's policies were not identical. Chernenko integrated elements from

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[55] Iegor Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin*, 35.

both his predecessors into his own policies and as such, adopted a moderate approach to managerial issues. Conceivably, this approach served both to mediate between the divergent party factions and also to accommodate his own vision for the USSR. Chernenko remained largely loyal to Brezhnev's style of leadership but he also worked toward the economic revitalization of the country through conventional means. This traditionalism also affected his stance on improved discipline. In a speech on 19 April 1984, Chernenko praised Mikhail Solomentsev, Politburo member and former ally of Andropov, for his "increased responsibility in all divisions of his work."[56] The comment suggests an appreciation for reformers in the leadership. On the other hand, perhaps more revealing of Chernenko's personal sentiments was his partial rehabilitation of Joseph Stalin. Although this occurred to some degree under Brezhnev, Chernenko went much further. Books and articles that praised Stalin and specifically his role during the Great Patriotic War were permitted to be published. The authorities also rehabilitated Viacheslav Molotov in July 1984, and allowed him to rejoin the CPSU.[57] People in the Soviet Union no doubt interpreted these commemorative steps as distinct acts by Chernenko to solidify his perception of the ideal Soviet citizen and leader. These conflicting aspects of Chernenko's public persona are reflected in official literature of the period. Before gaining power, Chernenko often mentioned Stalin's policies, especially his constitution, in various speeches and writings. Whereas some historians believe that Chernenko adopted a mild neo-Stalinist approach in order to provide Brezhnev with a

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[56] K U. Chernenko, "Vystuplenie v Kremle pri vruchenii nagrad rodiny chleny politbiuro TsK KPSS tovarishchu M. S. Solomentsevu, chlenu politbiuro TsK KPSS, ministru oborony SSSR marshalu sovetskogo soiuza tovarishchu D. F. Ustinovu, kandidatu v chleny politbiuro TsK KPSS, predsedateliu komiteta gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti SSSR tovarishchu V. M. Chebrikovu, 19 aprelia 1984," *Po puty sovershenstvovaniia razvitogo sotsiializma* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1985), 72.
[57] Robert Kaiser, *Why Gorbachev Happened. His Triumphs and His Failure* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 65.

modus operandi, others draw no connection between the two and instead view Andropov as the more neo-Stalinist of the interregnum leaders.[58] This dichotomy continued throughout Chernenko's term as he attempted to balance the existing competing factions present in his government.

The short term of Konstantin Chernenko restored stability among the political elite. Within a few months it became clear that their jobs would no longer be in jeopardy and that investigations into corruption and disciplinary problems would diminish. Chernenko's deceleration of the majority of Andropov's campaign did not indicate a complete return to a Brezhnev style leadership. Although one of his closest advisors believed that he was "categorically against Andropov and did not see the necessity of the changes he enacted in the party in terms of leadership and administrative style" Chernenko's policies failed to project that degree of intensity.[59] Rather, it can be assumed, as Pribytkov believed, that Chernenko and his leadership were "one hundred percent confident in the stability and invulnerability of the system" and that Andropov's managerial reforms were not saving the Soviet Union from an imminent demise.[60] The partial change from Andropov's blunt leadership style is an indication of Chernenko's more limited ambitions and ability to completely control the Party. Because of his close affiliations with Andropov, Mikhail Gorbachev acquired the support of approximately half of the remaining Politburo members by the spring of 1985.[61] Although Gorbachev needed to act carefully in order to retain his position and the trust of Chernenko, the

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[58] Ilya Zemtsov, *Policy Dilemmas and the Struggle for Power* (Jerusalem: IRICS Publishers, 1983), 98 and Parker, *Kremlin in Transition*, 200-203.
[59] Viktor Pribytkov, *Apparat: 390 dnei i vsia zhizn Genseka Chernenko* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 2002), 129.
[60] Ibid., 180.
[61] Parker, 423.

entire interregnum was a prosperous time for him insofar as gaining political control and allies in many factions of the government. Overall, 1984 and early 1985, in terms of personnel reforms, was a period of stability and security, but still a departure from the stagnation of the Brezhnev term which in turn, created the impetus, one can infer, for the turbulent period that followed.

IV

Leonid Brezhnev's trust in cadres program, while it stabilized political life, it assisted the completion of Andropov's subsequent reforms. It is impossible to separate the corruption and discipline campaigns from the reintegration of new members into the Communist Party. Andropov especially used these campaigns as his justification for the expulsion of certain Brezhnevite party members. Even though Chernenko did not pursue any of Andropov's campaigns with the same dynamism, he did not endorse a complete reversion to a Brezhnev style leadership. Both interregnum leaders developed their individual policies and styles of leadership. Arguably, the modifications to the party leadership during the interregnum presented Gorbachev with more opportunities for reforms than might have been the case had the leadership remained constant.

The leadership styles of the interregnum leaders regarding domestic policies were distinct. By his decisions to remove the party leaders during the corruption campaign, Andropov reverted to a Leninist model of promotions and demotions—a step that separated him from the past but did not jeopardize his own position. Although Chernenko referred to the policies and principles of Lenin in his numerous speeches, it was more of a formality than an actual commitment to the original foundations of the Soviet Union. Andropov, and later Gorbachev, also referred to Lenin's principles;

however, their personal policies followed more closely with the USSR founder's dogma than with Brezhnev's. Despite each leader's commitment to Lenin and, to some extent, Stalin, both Andropov and Chernenko adopted the aspects of existing policies that suited their desires and attempted to forge their own paths. The interregnum offered the Soviet leadership a break from favouritism, patronage, and intense levels of corruption that was not well received by many Soviet officials. Both Andropov and Chernenko advocated a restructuring of party policy but Andropov's reforms undoubtedly affected the leadership to a greater degree than those of his successor. Chernenko wanted the Party and country to move forward but he was less willing to do so at the expense of his comrades' careers. The interregnum leaders' leadership styles are direct reflections of their previous careers in the Soviet system. It was perhaps self-evident that Andropov, former leader of the relatively uncorrupt KGB, desired increased discipline just as it was that Chernenko strove for a strong economy and powerful international position. Neither leadership style was identical to that of Brezhnev. On the contrary, Iurii Vladimirovich and Konstantin Ustinovich presented new ideas to the party apparatus and used their time in power to revitalize and re-inspire the leadership.

**Chapter Three: The Impact of Social Issues on the Policies of New Leaders**

This chapter will explore the social conditions that resulted from the political and economic circumstances of the Brezhnev era. Despite the beginning of an economic revitalization, the Soviet population placed increasing demands on the government for consumer goods and more substantial luxuries. Although more goods than ever before were available to the general public, increasing average incomes and stabilized living costs accentuated the population's desire to purchase goods of higher quality and in greater quantities. As each General Secretary had a distinct leadership style and emphasis, it was inevitable that certain projects received higher priority than others and often the direct needs of the population were sacrificed to the military-industrial complex. While each interregnum leader approached social issues differently, citations of these questions in the press and official speeches represented at least a nominal recognition of their importance to general policy making. In this chapter, the speeches and writings of both Andropov and Chernenko will be examined in an attempt to explain both the motivations behind their actions as well as their apparent desires for the social direction of the country. Specifically, in order to demonstrate individual leadership styles, Chernenko's housing and consumer goods campaigns will be examined to illustrate his commitment to advancing socialism and identify his specific goals. The morale of the Soviet population will be discussed in terms of how it was perceived and addressed by the leaders. Morale was inevitably linked to the drive to increase consumer goods and the growing corruption problem; however, because of the insufficiency and unreliability of data, it is impossible to determine the actual opinions and feelings of the average Soviet citizen at that time.

As was briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, whereas Chernenko desired a reversion to a Brezhnev, and to some degree neo-Stalinist, style of leadership, Andropov as well as Gorbachev heralded back to Lenin and what he perceived as the "true" principles of socialism. From these contrasting starting points the leaders approached their positions and began to undertake the task of resolving the many social problems pervading Soviet towns and villages. Through the many speeches given by key figures and the documents presented to the Central Committee and the Politburo, the motivations behind the leaders' decisions will become evident. It must be acknowledged that Chernenko was very ill throughout his entire term and as such was presumably unable to enforce fully his policies and desires for the direction of the Party and the country. Gorbachev's role as second secretary was far more important than was Chernenko's under Andropov despite the fact that the latter was seriously ill less than a year into his period as General Secretary.[1] Although some historians believe that Gorbachev adopted many of the ideas initialized by Chernenko, it is far more likely that Gorbachev was controlling Party decisions because of the former's illness.[2] Christian Schmidt-Hauer believed that despite Chernenko's attempt to present a strong, united front to the world, Gorbachev in fact "controlled ideology, the Party machine, the economy, and agriculture."[3] Whereas this statement might be too strong, it becomes clear that

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[1] Even though Andropov experienced prolonged periods of illness during his term, he remained in control of Party members and the direction of the government. Not only did Andropov have more allies than his successor, but those allies remained in the Party throughout Chernenko's term and reinforced Gorbachev's position making it difficult for Chernenko to enforce his ideas within the Party apparatus. Despite this fact, Andropov's remaining allies did not have the strength to bring Gorbachev into power in 1984.

[2] Zemtsov states repeatedly that Gorbachev continued with the reforming policies of Chernenko. See: Ilya Zemtsov, *Chernenko: The Last Bolshevik. The Soviet Union on the Eve of Perestroika* (Oxford: Transaction Publishers, 1989): 101, 116, etc.

[3] Christian Schmidt-Hauer, *Gorbachev the Path to Power*, (London: I. B. Tauris: 1986): 110.

Gorbachev, along with some of his allies, controlled many aspects of the government throughout 1984-1985.

The lengthy Brezhnev era profoundly affected the outlook of the Soviet population. Increasing emphasis on the military and foreign policy combined with advancing technologies and increasing availability of information from the West created the impetus for social dissatisfaction.[4] However, Reinhard Meier notes that the tensions that did exist were expressed passively through such means as the "withdrawal into one's own private niche, apathy, corruption, and the devising of skilful ways of cheating the state authority."[5] Nevertheless, there was not the kind of social unrest experienced in some Soviet bloc countries at this time in which social conditions were much more difficult. In fact, the Soviet people had access to more goods and enjoyed a better quality of life than almost any other period in the USSR. The initial perception of Andropov as a potential reformer offered the possibility for increased emphasis on consumer welfare and social projects.[6] As discussed above, his term resulted in increased labour productivity as well as significant personnel and managerial reforms; however, either time or lack of incentive prevented any substantial benefits from improving the everyday lives of Soviet citizens. Contrarily, according to Zemtsov, Chernenko desired an

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[4] James H. Billington, "Generational Change: In Search of a Post-Stalinist Identity," in *From Brezhnev to Gorbachev* ed., Hans-Joachim Veen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987): 160. Although this may be true Billington believes there was too much cynicism among the people and that no substantial disturbances would arise.

[5] Reinhard Meier, "The Soviet Citizen and his State," in *From Brezhnev to Gorbachev*, ed., Hans-Joachim Veen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987): 149.

[6] Donald R. Kelly, *Soviet Politics from Brezhnev to Gorbachev*, (New York: Praeger, 1987): 118. Also, Hazard states that Soviet leaders are bound by past laws and codes to the existing modes of development. Because the Soviet Union claimed to be on the road toward developed socialism since 1967, it was natural that Brezhnev would continue this line of thinking and it would again be taking up by Chernenko. In the leaders' eyes, there were only two possibilities to increase production—rearranging the state system or implementing a system of bonuses. Capitalism was never an option. John N. Hazard, "Legal Policy in the Soviet Union," in *The Soviet Union in the 1980s,* ed., Erik P. Hoffman. (New York: Proceedings from the Academy of Political Science, 1984): 58-60.

increased emphasis on consumer goods as he regarded Soviet socialism to be further developed than his immediate predecessor.[7] On this basis he proposed to increase the development of housing and the production of a vast number of consumer goods—especially those required by children and families.

At this time, the Soviet Union became somewhat directionless in its ideological policy. This situation resulted in part from a vague and uninspired approach by the Party leadership over the previous decade, but was also influenced by the increased diffusion of information and ideas available through various media. Consequently, the government resumed its jamming of Western radio broadcasts during the early 1980s in an attempt to quell the impact of Western opinion among the population. Party doctrine is perhaps an area in which the intentions of Andropov and Chernenko were more similar than disparate. According to Alfred Evans Jr., both interregnum leaders perceived the benefits of balanced ideology and appreciated the negative effects that declining economic growth might have on the public.[8] Although both leaders agreed that ideological unity within the Soviet Union was essential for both the state organs and the general population, this agreement did not translate into identical outlooks regarding other policies. This chapter will examine these disparate approaches, their impact, and the overall results will be analyzed.

I

The longevity of the Brezhnev era presented any contender for the position of General Secretary with a plethora of political, economic, and social issues. The brevity

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[7] Ilya Zemtsov, *Andropov: Policy Dilemmas and the Struggle for Power,* (Jerusalem: IRICS Publishers, 1983): 103.
[8] Alfred Evans Jr., "The Decline of Developed Socialism? Some Trends in Recent Soviet Ideology." *Soviet Studies* 38, no. 1 (Jan., 1986): 2.

of the interregnum prevented any substantive and durable alteration of leadership methods. Timothy J. Colton outlined six major difficulties encountered by new leaders, including: the growing disparity between reality and the expectations of society, increasing popular tendency to focus on one's own morality, and the fruitlessness of dated policies.[9] These questions not only presented problems to Andropov, but because he was unable to resolve them during his brief term, they persisted throughout the leaderships of Chernenko and Gorbachev as well. According to several of the biographies discussed in the introduction to this work, Iurii Andropov possessed the ability and desire to remedy many of the social issues that plagued the Soviet people; however, it is evident that these were not given priority.[10] Conversely, whereas the secondary literature does not analyze Chernenko's approach towards social issues during his term, the primary literature suggests that problems of this nature were given higher priority. This analysis examines the divergent opinions in the literature concerning the interregnum leaders' approaches to both running the country and specific social problems and provides an assessment of their individual motivations and purposes.

Years of military prominence and declining economic productivity under Brezhnev left the Soviet population without many basic necessities such as adequate housing, healthcare, and general consumer goods. According to Mikhail Gorbachev, Brezhnev's death and the current condition of society presented an important question to the newly inaugurated leaders: "Will the status quo be maintained and the downward

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[9] Timothy J. Colton, "What Ails the Soviet System?" *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 35, no. 3 (1984): 15.

[10] For example: Steele and Abraham state that Andropov "has the intellectual ability to recognize problems…the imagination to look for, or to ask his aides to look for, workable solutions, and the political will to try to implement them." Also, Parker, who wrote after the interregnum, believed that Andropov fully intended to improve living conditions throughout the Soviet Union. John W. Parker, *Kremlin in Transition. From Brezhnev to Chernenko, 1978-1985* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1991): 190; and Johnathan Steele and Erik Abraham, *Andropov in Power* (Oxford: Robertson, 1983): 158.

course of society continue, or will far-reaching changes occur, involving the priority issue of renewing the political leadership?"[11] Andropov did enact a certain degree of renewal within the political leadership; but did little to assuage existing problems within Soviet society. Rather, Andropov "not without a hint of bitterness" recognized that the Soviet political system had lost the battle to improve social conditions throughout the country.[12] This apparently despondent approach to social issues indicated that the General Secretary had resigned himself to accept the current situation, and instead of focusing on these issues in budgetary and policy development, adopted his own style to manage Soviet society. It is argued here that Andropov's KGB background was most noticeable in his social policies.

Having been a goal oriented leader of the KGB with a heavy emphasis on efficiency and organization, Andropov addressed social issues similarly. This leadership style perhaps negatively affected his legacy; however, official insiders have divergent opinions on the topic. Sergei Semanov, a Soviet historian, believed that Andropov's regime "inherited a very bad and unpopular legacy with managerial decline, growing social collapse, and almost complete stagnation of civil ideological life, but as a consequence—there was an absence of a social plan for the near future."[13] Perhaps this legacy materialized solely because of Andropov's illness and the effects it had on political progress. It seems more likely that Andropov's political stance on social issues, in contrast to his stance on disciplinary or economic improvement, created animosity amongst certain aspects of society and was a more serious factor than his illness. Nevertheless, he introduced reforms in other political arenas. During his term as General

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[11] Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1995): 138.
[12] Ilya Zemtsov, *Andropov: Policy Dilemmas and the Struggle for Power:* 132.
[13] Sergei Semanov, *Iurii Vladimirovich. Zarmosovki iz teni* (Moscow: Stolitsa, 1995): 82.

Secretary, Andropov promoted and employed eavesdroppers whose sole task was to investigate which sectors of society were dissatisfied with their current state of affairs as well as the precise issues that were causing grief.[14] Although this tactic allowed Andropov to employ his KGB training and allies to acquire important information, it prevented him from creating the façade of an open and concerned leadership, a phenomenon the Soviet Union had never experienced.

Andropov's inaugural speech on 12 November 1982, emphasized the deteriorating condition of the economy and the internal organs of the government, as has been discussed in previous chapters. While other domestic affairs were ignored initially, they were brought to the forefront by other members of the government within a few weeks. In December 1982, *Izvestiia* printed sections of Grigorii Romanov's speech in which he stated, "Today Iurii Vladimirovich Andropov spoke about several shortages that concern the maintenance of norms of Soviet communities that are the result of [the government's] miscalculation in educational and economic activities."[15] Although this statement, and others like it made by the General Secretary and endorsed by his associates, had the potential to affect public relations, the lack of specificity in Andropov's social program is far more noticeable than in his economic and political programs despite the fact that they have been accused of possessing identical flaws.[16] By the middle of his term, Andropov acknowledged that the "needs and interests of the people" ought to be brought "closer to the activities of the party and government

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[14] Zemtsov, *Andropov*, 177.
[15] "Rech tovarishcha G. V. Romanova," *Izvestiia*, 22 dekabriia 1982.
[16] Chaim Groys. "The New Soviet Leadership Takes its First Steps on the Economic Front," *Radio Free Europe*, 13 January 1983, 1.

organs."[17] In doing so, he admitted that his domestic policy plans inadequately addressed the needs of the general population and to a certain degree provided his successor with an opportunity to both distance himself from the past and appeal to the Soviet people.

Since 1985, and especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Soviet and former Soviet officials have reflected on the overall popularity of the interregnum leaders. Pavel Palazchenko, an official interpreter, observed that Andropov was still well regarded upon his death and that "there was a genuine sadness, punctuated by everyone's distaste for the man who was chosen to replace him as General Secretary."[18] Similarly, Aleksandrov-Agentov, an important Soviet aide, believed that "Chernenko was not a politician and it was unbecoming to him despite the fact that he was flattered by the elevated power. He was traditionally an assistant, a smart, well organized and able clerical worker, but perhaps, no more."[19] Among government officials Chernenko did not seem like an able leader; however, his speech at the Extraordinary Plenary Meeting following Andropov's death presents an image of a competent bureaucrat. His first speech as General Secretary failed to present any large scale plans for reform or innovative ideas but there was a noticeable distinction in emphasis from Andropov's speeches. After praising Andropov, Chernenko stated that his government would be "improving the working and living conditions of Soviet people, medical services, and housing construction," and that this will "fully accord with the supreme goal of Party

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[17] Iu. V. Andropov, "Rech generalnogo sekretaria TSK KPSS tovarishcha Iu. V. Andropova," *Materialy plenuma tsentralnogo komitea KPSS iuniia 1983,* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1983): 16.
[18] Pavel Palazchenko, *My Years with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze. The Memoir of a Soviet Interpreter,* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997): 20.
[19] A. M. Aleksandrov-Agentov, *Ot Kollontai do Gorbacheva,* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia, 1994): 271.

policy—all-round concern for the people's welfare."[20] It is not until he made social conditions a priority that he addressed the most prominent issues of the Andropov era—order, discipline, and economic efficiency. Although the need to improve social conditions, such as adequate housing, was not new to the Communist Party and government, the priority it is given illustrates what little domestic change Chernenko was able to allow.

Chernenko's personal and professional relationship with Leonid Brezhnev greatly influenced his visions for the Soviet Union. The mini-purge of the past year, in part, determined the degree to which he could enforce a reversion to a Brezhnev-style leadership rather than policies introduced by Andropov and promoted by his remaining supporters.[21] Historians have argued that Chernenko was too weak to create political harmony or solid platforms that could ensure the success of his domestic or foreign policy campaigns.[22] Although such opinions are not without foundation, he nevertheless managed to solidify his stance on domestic policy and consumer goods and propagated his views in numerous speeches and articles published in the Soviet media demonstrating his commitment to the people's welfare. Two weeks after his term began, an article in *Izvestiia* reported on his proposed plan, citing his comment that, "It is important now to secure and multiply positive improvements in all spheres of public life. Today, comrades, it is especially important to support concrete activities and obtain genuine and weighty results."[23] Regardless of his conservative outlook, Chernenko was unable to

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[20] K. U. Chernenko, "Speech at the Extraordinary Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the CPSU, 13 February 1984" in *Speeches and Writings,* 2nd edition. (Oxford: Pergamon,, 1984): 218.
[21] At the beginning, and throughout his term, Andropov "purged" almost 20% of the top Soviet officials as well as 40% of lesser ranking leading members of the state. This change in leadership was directly linked to his discipline and corruption campaigns and was discussed in detail in the preceding chapter.
[22] Mark Galeotti, *Gorbachev and his Revolution,* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997): 41.
[23] "K novym rubezham kommunisticheskogo sozidaniia," *Izvestiia,* 23 dekabriia 1984.

neglect Andropov's progressive allies who had gained a considerable amount of power over the previous year and a half. Thus, many of the official statements released in the press contained a phrase or key words that were seemingly intended to placate that faction of the Party. This is evident if the wording of Chernenko's statements is analyzed. For example, in April 1984 he stated: "Now, like never before, we need a thorough review of decisions and large-scale *organizational work*, so that we can raise considerably the *efficacy of the economy* and thus, improve the living conditions of all soviet people."[24] This quotation illustrates the factionalism present in the soviet administration and the relatively neutral tone Chernenko adopted—either out of necessity or out of routine. Although both Chernenko and Andropov grew politically under the same stagnant atmosphere of the Communist Party, their commitment to the people's welfare could not have been more different. Chernenko, although committed to improving living conditions, remained faithful to Brezhnev's ritualistic ideals of communism and refused to adopt Andropov's governing methods into his vision for the improved welfare of the Soviet population.

II

Consumer goods and the people's welfare were never high priority issues in Soviet planning. This neglect occurred in part because of the production goals of the five-year plans that focused on heavy industry and military spending and the fact that often in order for quotas to be met, specific goods did not need to be produced; rather, quantities (in kilograms, meters, or other measurements) were the only method by which

[24] "Trud i znaniia—partii, rodine," *Izvestiia,* 12 aprelia 1984. Italics added by author of this work.

production was measured.[25] Since it was easier for factories to meet their quotas by producing larger industrial goods, consumer goods failed to materialize on the market. The government was hardly oblivious of the lack of consumer goods and light industry production; rather the matter required an alteration of the five-year planning system, a task that no administration was willing or able to undertake.[26] Thus, citizens frequently went without basic necessities or queued for hours in hopes of acquiring some of the limited products that occasionally appeared on the shelves of local stores. Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko undertook to resolve this problem during their terms, with varying degrees of success. The lack of adequate housing was a particular issue emphasized by Chernenko that permitted Western analysts to speculate that perhaps he would not simply follow along the same path as his patron, Brezhnev, but might make a genuine attempt to enhance living standards of Soviet citizens.

The Soviet leadership from Khrushchev onward had recognized the problems in Soviet society, especially housing in cities.[27] Some steps were taken to address the needs of the people and relieve the demand on light industry producers. For example, near the end of Brezhnev's term, in July 1981, a decision was made to "considerably increase the output of underclothes for newborns and preschool aged children, shoes, rubber boots,

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[25] Nicholas V Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 6th edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 497.

[26] Jonathan Steele and Erik Abraham, *Andropov in Power* (Oxford: Robertson, 1983), 168. The authors state that Andropov was more cautious than he wanted to initially appear and as such was unable and unwilling to alter tradition Soviet planning systems.

[27] Nikita Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev. Volume 2, Reformer 1945-1964*, ed., Sergei Khrushchev (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 280-82. Not only did Khrushchev recognize that society was in desperate need of housing, he also proposed altering the bureaucratic system under which houses were constructed.

notebooks, pencils, soap, tea, and other goods" during the Eleventh Five-Year Plan.[28] Brezhnev's death and the rapid turnover of General Secretaries over the next three years jeopardized the success of all aspects of the five-year plan and the budget. Although the interregnum leaders pledged their allegiance to the existing plan, they each emphasized aspects they deemed more important to the overall welfare of the Soviet Union. Despite the continued commitment pledge, output of children's goods declined over the Eleventh Five-Year Plan. Over this five-year period, the production of coats fell by 5.8 million, boys' clothes by 8.6 million, and girls' dresses by 10 million.[29] Children's shoes represented one of the few growth sectors with an increase of 32 million pairs over the previous Five-Year Plan.[30] Bond and Levine maintain that one of the reasons for continued decline was the fact that leaders, such as Chernenko were unable to determine the exact causes of economic deterioration and were unable to decide on appropriate solutions.[31] The Brezhnev leadership demonstrated interest not only in the production of goods, but also in the physical welfare of the working population. In June 1982, a document accentuated the need to "increase the duration of labour activity and life of the people through the strengthening of their health."[32] Although specific recommendations regarding hospitals, healthcare, pensions, or the quality of life were not mentioned, the government was, albeit perhaps ritualistically, recognizing the possible ramifications of a discontented or unhealthy society.

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[28] Resheniia partii i pravitelstva po khoziaistvennym voprosom. Tom 14. Aprel 1981-Deakbr 1982, *Ob uvelichenii proizvodstva tovarov massovogo sprosa, povyshenni kachestva i uluchshenii ikh assortimenta v 1981-1985 goda. 30 iiulia 1981*, (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1983), 64.
[29] *Narodnoe Khoziaistvo SSSR za 70 let. Iubileninyi statisticheskii ezhegodnik*, (Moscow: Financy i statistika, 1987): 195.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Daniel Bond and Herbert Levine, "The Soviet Domestic Economy in the 1980s" in *Soviet Politics in the 1980s* ed., Helmut Sonnenfeldt. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985): 81.
[32] Svod Zakonov SSSR. Tom 1, *Ob utverzhdenii polozheniia o gosudarstvennom planom komiteta SSSR. 17 iunia 1982* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo izvestiia, 1989), 206.

Despite Andropov's initial campaign to overhaul many aspects of the antiquated methods Brezhnev used to govern the country, circumstances prevented him from enacting the drastic planning alterations necessary to reorient the targets of the five-year planning system from heavy industrial to consumer goods. His heavy emphasis on economic efficiency was manifested in his outlook toward the needs of the average population. Upon gaining control of the party and government, his outline for the upcoming year included a "new fulfillment of economic and cultural construction that would provide for the long and successful advancement of the country toward a Leninist path to communism."[33] Yet although this statement addressed the need for an improved economy and its benefits for Soviet culture and society, it was plagued with ambiguity and uncertainty. Few documents that date from Andropov's term as General Secretary, whether written by he or his colleagues, specifically addressed societal issues such as consumer goods, health care, or housing, nor did they offer possible solutions to endemic and persistent dilemmas. When these questions were adopted exclusively for immediate attention the approach was uniquely Andropov's. Rather than propose solutions, Andropov's government called for worker's collectives to "participate in decisions regarding the use of funds for material incentives, social-cultural measures and housing construction in the development of industry."[34] Again, Andropov failed to recommend specific solutions for existing problems but rather indicated that his government would be willing to investigate them based on the demands of the people.

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[33] KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh sezdov, konferentsii i plenumov. Tom 14, 1981-1984, *O proektakh gosudarstvennogo plana ekonomicheskogo i sotsialnogo razvitiia SSSR i gosudarstvennogo biudzheta SSSR na 1983 god, 22 noiabria 1982* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1987), 380.

[34] Resheniia partii i pravitelstva po khoziaistvennym voprosom. Tom 15, Chast 1,1983-mai 1984, *O trudovykh kollektivakh i pobyshenii ikh roli v upravlenii predpriiatiiami, uchrezhdeniiami, organizatsiiam,. 17 iunia 1983* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1985), 109.

As Andropov slowly filled the upper echelons of the party and government with his allies, official documents communicated a sense of assertion in policy making and the direction of society within the Soviet Union. Although recommendations did not become necessarily more specific, they became more entwined with increased levels of discipline and commitment to the overall improvement of Soviet life. In an effort to improve the morale of veterans and the older generation who may have been most dissatisfied with current conditions, Andropov appealed to their hard work and commitment to Soviet progress. In July 1983, a document stated, "In order to strengthen the moral conscience of labouring veterans, it is necessary to reward workers and labourers with the "Veterans of Labour" medal not only in a period of war, but also by the attainment of their labour record."[35] It was not until his final days that Andropov devoted his full attention to improving the quality of life across the Soviet Union. One week before his death a document was released regarding economic experimentation—a concept Andropov encouraged fully in the hopes it would spawn increased industrial production—including the different directions that needed to be explored in consumer goods and infrastructure. This document was the most specific regarding the need to raise consumer goods during the Andropov interregnum. It called for:

> the amelioration of quality services, an increase in cultural services for the population, the complete satisfaction of the population's service needs through the reconstruction of apartments, the repair and restoration of consumer radio and television apparatuses, everyday machines and instruments, clothes, shoes, furniture, and other wares, which are found for people, by hiring subjects of long use, in services of photo studio, barbers, but also the broadening of services, especially to inhabitants of rural areas.[36]

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[35] Svod Zakonov SSSR. Tom 2, *Ob usilenii raboty po ukrepleniiu sotsialisticheskoi distsiplinu truda, 28 iulia 1983* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo izvestiia, 1989), 337.

[36] Svod Zakonov SSSR. Tom 8. *O provedanii ekonomicheskogo eksperimenta po raschireniiu khoziaistvennoi samostoiatelnosti i usileniiu zainteresovannosti proizvodstvennykh obedinenii sistemy*

Andropov's death left the execution and completion of these tasks in the hands of his successor. As observed, Andropov's initial approach did not address the daily societal issues faced by rank-and-file Soviet citizens and thus, his term accomplished little in this area.

The year 1984 represented a notable turning point for the development of consumer goods. It appeared that the new General Secretary was genuinely concerned with living conditions of the Soviet people and the way they affected their commitment to Soviet progress. At the April 1984 Plenum, Chernenko stated that national deputies needed to address the fact that workers frequently wrote into the central organs complaining about "how cold it is in the apartments, the unsanitary conditions in the cities, housing, shortage of work, poor lighting in the streets, and hooliganism in well-lit areas."[37] By calling the delegates attention to the fact that people were dissatisfied with their state of affairs, Chernenko initiated a campaign to focus government initiatives on these more "mundane" societal problems. Although the Chernenko government continued to focus on the existing budget and five-year plan, his speeches heralded a shift of concentration away from heavy industry. Many speeches and decrees continued to be published in state newspapers, thus providing Soviet citizens with some perspective on the new priorities. During a speech at an election meeting in the Moscow region, Chernenko affirmed that "in the last year [1984] more than two million apartments were

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*ministerstva bytovogo obsluzhivaniia naseleniia RSFSR v bole polnom udovletvorenii potrebnostei naseleniia v uslugakh, 2 fevralia 1984* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo izvestiia, 1989), 504-2.

[37] K. U. Chernenko, "Rech generalnogo sekretaria TsK KPSS Tovarishcha K. U. Chernenko," *Materialy plenuma tsentralnogo komiteta KPSS 10 aprelia 1984* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1984), 7.

built—more than any other year in the previous five years."[38] This statement received prolonged applause, which albeit ritualistic, reflected the new leadership's growing acceptance. The statistics used in Chernenko's early 1985 speech correspond for the most part with official statistics published in 1987.[39] During the Eleventh Five-Year Plan, over 10 million homes were constructed compared to just two million built in 1985 alone. Although these numbers are lower than the Tenth Five-Year Plan totals, Chernenko's period represented the most productive construction period of the 1981-1985 Plan.[40] In addition to an increase in housing production, there was also an increase in the average size of a typical Soviet apartment. Apartments constructed during the 1976-1980 Plan averaged 51.6m$^2$, whereas those built between 1980-1985 averaged 54.3m$^2$.[41] Through his consistent appeals to the Soviet people combined with the propagation of impressive statistics Chernenko distinguished himself from previous leaders and exhibited a genuine commitment to social improvements.

Traditional Soviet-style planning gave low priority to the growth of light industry and products more beneficial to Soviet citizens and focused more on the global status of the Soviet Union. The persistent pledges by Soviet leaders to direct attention and money towards the amelioration of society continuously fell short of materializing which, in turn, created at least the potential for the sort of social unrest as was experienced in several less authoritarian Eastern European countries in the post-Stalinist period. Social unrest did not occur in the Soviet Union to a comparable degree; rather the population

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[38] K. U. Chernenko, "Narod i partiia ediny" *Po puti sovershenstvovaniia razvitogo sotsializma* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1985), 21.
[39] The statistics used are from an official publication from 1987 that lists production results as well as other statistics from across the Soviet Union. These were compared to the statistics used in Chernenko's speech.
[40] *Narodnoe Khoziaistvo*, 510. The Tenth Five Year Plan experienced the construction of 10.241 million homes with just over two million produced in 1980 alone.
[41] Narodnoe Khoziaistvo, 512.

became increasingly pessimistic regarding the existing leadership and their personal situations.[42] Although the three leaders discussed in this work consistently recommended an increased focus on consumer goods and welfare, hard information about the fulfillment of their goals is limited by the lack of reliable statistics. According to Alan H. Smith, ownership of consumer products, in particular refrigerators, washing machines, televisions, and radios, had increased over the Tenth Five-Year Plan, and were expected to increase again over the Eleventh, albeit to a lesser degree.[43] According to the original projections for the Eleventh Five-Year Plan, by 1985, between one-fifth and one-quarter of Soviet citizens were expected to own the aforementioned goods, an increase of an average of 3 percent.[44] The planned targets for ownership failed to correspond with actual production results released after the completion of the Eleventh Plan. Whereas by 1985 the production per annum of televisions increased by approximately 1.8 million units, the production of refrigerators fell by 72 000 units per annum creating inconsistencies in the consumer market.[45] Perhaps one of the more consumer friendly developments during the 1981-1985 Plan, was the increase in the production of colour televisions which rose in relation to black and white televisions from 30 percent per annum in 1980, to 43 percent per annum in 1985.[46] The continuing trend of inconsistent consumer goods production as noted from official statistics remained as such because of the outdated planning techniques. The interregnum leaders were unable to mitigate this

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[42] Reinhard Meier, 149.
[43] Alan H. Smith, "Soviet Economic Prospects" in *The Soviet Union after Brezhnev* ed., Martin McCauley, (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983): 77, Table 4.2. During the Tenth Five-Year Plan the ownership of these consumer goods increased on average by 6 percent.
[44] Averages were calculated using the figures in Table 4.2 in McCauley.
[45] *Narodnoe Khoziaistvo*, 192. Averages per annum were calculated by the author using 1980 and 1985 per annum figures.
[46] Ibid. This is in comparison to the production of black and white televisions during the same period.

situation both because of their brief terms and the degree to which the Soviet system was entrenched in traditional bureaucratic methods.

Consumer goods production accentuated the differences between Andropov and Chernenko. Their speeches and writings provide insight into their motivations and goals for the Soviet Union. An examination of these speeches reveals that Andropov wanted society to become involved marginally in the political system through workers collectives and other such organizations. Conversely, Konstantin Chernenko was less concerned with popular input and more focused on producing tangible results that could be felt by the average citizen. Chernenko used the lack of consumer goods to his advantage and represented himself as a leader concerned with Soviet welfare in an attempt to strengthen his position within the Soviet leadership and begin a reversion to a Brezhnev style leadership of the 1960s or early 1970s.[47]

III

The shortage of consumer goods as well as the lack of stable leadership clearly heralded a period of uncertainty for the Soviet population. Regardless of the persistent hardships the average citizen faced, evidence suggests he remained relatively supportive of the regime. However, foreign observers are inconsistent in their evaluations of the social climate in the Soviet Union in the 1980s. For example, Reinhard Meier states that the relationship between the average Soviet citizen and their actual conditions was "unstable and burdened with conflict" but later asserts that citizens were, in general,

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[47] The Kosygin reforms of 1966 emphasized consumer goods to a lesser degree than the Liberman reforms that preceded them in 1964. As such, reforms regarding consumer goods in the Brezhnev period became less liberalized as his term progressed. Abram Bergson et al, "Soviet Economic Performance and Reform: Some Problems of Analysis and Prognosis," *Slavic Review* 35, no. 2 (June 1966): 224.

unconcerned with political events and "apathetic to these things."[48] Conflicting opinions from experts on the topic combined with the lack of documented commentary from Soviet citizens magnifies the difficulty of analyzing this period of Soviet history. Without actual testimonials, determining the consequences of rapid succession and shifting policies on society becomes problematic. However, the Soviet government was not threatened by potential uprisings such as the one in Poland, as Soviet citizens realized their situation was substantially better than it had been in the past and capacity to revolt without severe retributions was lacking.

Andropov and Chernenko had different views regarding declining civic morale and increased dissatisfaction with the availability of consumer goods. Chernenko believed that promises of increased housing availability and an expansion of consumer goods would quell any potential tension. Conversely, Andropov's policies emphasized the economic benefits of a contented, well-endowed and strongly disciplined society rather than one with more social benefits. Although numerous articles appeared in the press regarding the government's commitment to augment consumer goods production, few addressed the state of civic morale and public opinion. Those that did appear called for a "collective healthy morale—psychological climate, and for workers to feel pride of their collectives" through the introduction of new and development of existing Soviet ceremonies.[49] In general, ceremonies undoubtedly improved civic morale for a limited period of time; however, ritualistic parades could not relieve lack of basic goods required by Soviet citizens to acquire everyday goods that continued to be in short supply. The

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[48] Reinhard Meier, "The Soviet Citizen and his State: A Split Relationship" in *From Brezhnev to Gorbachev* ed., Hans-Joachim Veen, 149 and 154.

[49] Resheniia partii i pravitelstva po khoziaistvennym voprosom. Tom 15, chast 1 1983-mai 1984, *O trudovykh kollektivakh i pobyshenii ikh roli v upravlenii predpriiatiiami, uchrezhdeniiami, organizatsiiami, 17 iunia 1983*, 111.

lengthy queues undermined Andropov's campaign for greater discipline at the workplace, and in addition queuing and missing work was punishable by law despite the fact that it served as a necessary tool for survival. Parades and ceremonies may have provided citizens with a reminder of the strength and power of the Soviet Union but they remained an insufficient solution to the social problems that affected the average person every day of his/her life and could have potentially created more apathy or unrest amongst people. If the government was able to afford these elaborate parades that occurred on a regular basis, or develop elaborate space programs, why could it not provide standard consumer goods?

The continuously changing political and social circumstances within the Soviet Union combined with advancing technologies and the availability of outside media facilitated disillusionment with the political system. Although the USSR could compete in gross production as well as in the military sphere, it fell well behind in the area of advanced technologies. Its comparative lack of advancement was featured in foreign news reports that increasingly filtered into the country through foreign radio broadcasts. The government tried in vain to jam available radio frequencies but was never more than partially successful. In addition, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 as well as the strong ideological position taken by the Reagan administration in the USA after 1981 revived Cold War tensions. These events undoubtedly had some impact within the country in the interregnum period and created problems never encountered by earlier Soviet leaders.

Social cynicism manifested itself in a variety of ways in during and immediately preceding the interregnum. Not only were average citizens increasingly unwilling to

purchase poorly made or out-dated goods, especially clothing, but their increased incomes and the sporadic availability of consumer goods allowed for selective purchasing.[50] Yet, despite growing dissatisfaction within society, most people continued to support the direction of their government, especially in foreign policy. According to Meier, most people probably supported the war in Afghanistan, did not support the Polish Solidarity movement of 1981, and approved of the shooting down of KAL-007, a South Korean passenger jet, in 1983.[51] The overwhelming support for certain government policies, nevertheless, failed to suppress all social discontent. Andropov's attempt to prevent despondent citizens from emigrating and leaving the country caused even more unrest among the people. During the Brezhnev regime, citizens enjoyed more freedom in emigration but once Andropov became General Secretary, the situation changed. Not only were border controls tightened but emigration, especially of ethnic Germans and Jews, declined to the lowest numbers in over a decade in 1983.[52] Although this policy fostered animosity within certain sectors of society, it allowed Andropov to manage emigration more strictly and present the illusion of a contented society to the Western world. Because of the announcement of lower emigration numbers in the USSR, Western leaders recognized that the current administration had adopted a hard-line approach reminiscent of the Stalinist period. From the limited information available regarding Soviet opinion it can be discerned that the interregnum leaders faced a plethora of problems that even a stronger, more enduring leader would not have been able to alleviate.

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[50] Maria Ruben, "The Consumer Economy" in *From Brezhnev to Gorbachev* ed., Hans-Joachim Veen, 15.
[51] Reinhard Meier, 151.
[52] Cornelia I. Gerstenmaier, "Dissidents," in *From Brezhnev to Gorbachev,* 174. For example: in 1983, 1,447 Germans were permitted to emigrate as compared to 10,000 in 1976. Also, in the same year only 1,307 Jews emigrated whereas in 1979, 51,320 left the Soviet Union.

Social apathy permeated society to such a degree that neither Andropov nor Chernenko would have been able to remedy the problem if it was one of their pressing goals. Years of commitment to the centralized, administrative-command system created a society increasingly unwilling to work to improve the economy, which in turn, if reoriented by the leaders, could have been beneficial to societal welfare. Andropov's new style of leadership fostered a sense of hope among people, which quickly dissolved as the results of his plans became apparent. Chernenko's popular guise offered new hope, but ultimately failed to reassure people that material improvements would occur in the near future, not least because of the physical fragility of the new leader. Factional disputes within the Soviet leadership created uncertainty in the eyes of the elite as well as the average citizen. Chernenko's efforts to ameliorate society far outstripped those of his immediate predecessor and need to be recognized as a significant attempt at reform. However, the enacted reforms did not have time to come to fruition and the problems that had plagued the Soviet Union since its creation now became more obvious to Soviet citizens because of enhanced communication, with the outside world and the new technological advances in the West.

**Conclusion**

The years 1982 to 1985 were a time of political disorder for the Soviet leadership. With each incumbent leader, new policies were introduced, old policies were removed or altered, and the political stability that had become a familiar fixture among the nomenklatura disintegrated. Available secondary literature of this period remains insufficient as historians have not utilized extant resources to uncover a more thorough understanding of the inner workings of the political system. This examination of official Party documents, official speeches, the Soviet press, and memoirs has established that this period in history deserves recognition as an important juncture in Soviet history. Without the rapid successions of Iurii Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, the possibility for the quick implementation of the reforms and ideas of Mikhail Gorbachev would have been greatly reduced. It was the purpose of this thesis to illuminate numerous aspects of domestic Soviet politics and accentuate the differences between each leader, his ideas, and their potential consequences for the direction of the Soviet Union.

The use of official Party documents such as *Party and Government Decisions, The Collection of Laws of the USSR, The 26th Congress of the CPSU, Central Committee Plenums,* etc., in this thesis have provided new insights into the inner workings of the leadership during the early 1980s. Although many documents continue to follow the official Party line, there is a noticeable difference in the tone and emphasis of each different leader within the documents. It becomes evident that at the end of the Brezhnev era, Party officials failed to comprehend the extent to which the Soviet planning system required a drastic overhaul. The advent of Andropov saw an urgent attention to increased

production and discipline that had not been experienced for many years and although the policies he advocated themselves may not have been drastically different, his approach to his role in the government—in part because of his background in the KGB—promoted a renewed sense of energy and commitment among many government officials and workers alike. When Chernenko gained control, his language reverted back to the Brezhnev era; however it is combined with a realization of Andropov's continuing influence and an element of individuality and personal focus. The recognition of the individual leaders' acknowledgements and treatments of the various political and social problems within the Soviet Union adds to the existing literature on the subject. Rather than perceiving the 1982-1985 leadership as one of stagnant gerontocrats, it has been argued here that Andropov and Chernenko both had their own reform programs and attempted to put them into practice.

Chapter Two focused on the many problems that existed within the leadership apparatus and the measures taken by Andropov in an attempt to both bolster his power and improve the overall quality of leadership. Andropov's mini-purge signified the end to an era of heavy political patronage and excessive political corruption. This purge completely undermined Brezhnev's cadres program that had been in place throughout the preceding fifteen years and created animosity between remaining party and government officials. The discipline and corruption campaigns that accompanied the purge were clearly intended to unsettle complacent party officials. Despite the mixed reactions to his measures, Andropov wanted to ameliorate the Soviet system in the long term even if there were negative short-term implications. This purge, which was fuelled by Andropov's KGB background and desire to eliminate corruption and increase discipline,

brought new members into the Party and fostered some of the thinking that came to fruition under Gorbachev. Chernenko's attempt to reverse the effects of the purge and reinstate Party members who were closer to his and Brezhnev's way of thinking ultimately failed. Because Andropov was able to make such drastic changes in a period of only fifteen months, his successor could not create his own power base within the Party and fully pursue his desired leadership style. These changes in personnel demonstrate that both interregnum leaders desired to break with the past and end the political complacency that existed among the CPSU. Their terms were inevitably too short to exact major reforms; however the examination of the changes that did occur has shown that these years were not a stagnant era in Soviet history.

By dissecting primary documents and scrutinizing each individual leader within the context of the period, it becomes clear that the majority of the secondary literature has overlooked many aspects of the period. When the uninspiring atmosphere of the late Brezhnev period is juxtaposed with the urgency present when Andropov has power and with the compromising yet familiar tone of Chernenko, it is impossible to categorize the interregnum as a period that perpetuated stagnation until Gorbachev came to power. In this respect this thesis offers something new to the literature on the often overlooked early 1980s in the USSR. Unlike much of the literature available, this thesis has utilized a number of different primary documents and interpreted them as a whole rather than as individual pieces. The goal was to discern a more complete picture of the internal politics and economic and social conditions of the Soviet Union. Many of the categorizations placed on the individual leaders do remain valid—the end of the Brezhnev era saw the sharp decline of economic growth and the periods of Andropov and

Chernenko did not produce substantial changes in policy or production. However, it also becomes evident that until his death, the Brezhnev leadership contemplated the economic status of the Soviet Union; Andropov altered the composition of party leadership and introduced KGB-style purges to the governing of the Soviet Union. His term in office brought increased production and combated corruption and Chernenko, despite the desire to revert to a Brezhnev style of leadership, advocated increased consumer goods and improved housing to a far greater degree than both of his predecessors. This evidence belies his image of a caretaker leader and apparatchik.

The interregnum leaders faced obstacles within the government and Party structures that they could not overcome. The five-year planning system had been in place since Stalin's time and although a reversion to privatization or a market economy would have benefited overall production the Soviet system, no leader would have been able to complete such a task in the short term. Thus, no matter what reforms or promising policies were put in place by the new leaders, ultimately they were not trying to replace the existing economic and planning system. Also, Brezhnev's failure to replenish cadres allowed many officials to become very powerful and influential and as such, when Andropov attempted to restructure the party membership he was forced to begin at the bottom and be conscious of the precarious balance he needed to keep within the Party. These formidable obstacles help reinforce traditional arguments of the period that support the idea of continued stagnation prior to the Gorbachev era; reforms did take place and options for change were nevertheless available within the existing structure.

Party factionalism became a persistent problem near the end of Brezhnev's term and it became clear that he had not appointed a successor. Members of the party split

along ideological lines, but significantly, there was a noticeable division according to age. Many of the younger and newer party members agreed with Andropov's position while older members who were very comfortable with the established norm set by Brezhnev, tended to gravitate towards Chernenko. Even though Andropov gained control in 1982, and Chernenko did the same in 1984, during their respective terms they were forced to accommodate, at least in part, the desires of the opposing party factions. This factionalism was both a hindrance and an advantage to both Andropov and Chernenko. In terms of the pursuit of reforms, it forced the Chernenko administration to keep in place both Andropov's appointees and a general commitment to changes in both social and economic policies. There was a general dissatisfaction with the status-quo and recognition of the urgency of addressing issues such as corruption and a slowing economy.

Through the arguments presented in this thesis, the common perception of this period as one of stagnation, complacency and overall insignificance is questioned. The evidence presented above, gathered from a wide variety of documents and sources, sheds new light on a period that continues to be persistently overlooked by scholars of Soviet politics. Newly available memoirs and documents from the period have illuminated the intricacies of the domestic economic, political, social situations faced by leaders and provided evidence that justifies this period as one of potential reform and the beginning of a new era in Soviet history. The argument presented here, that so-called stagnation did in fact end with Leonid Brezhnev suggests that the origins of Perestroika lay in 1982-1984 rather than the commonly accepted 1985-1987 time period. Without fully understanding the years that preceded the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev, it is impossible

to evaluate objectively his policies, reforms, and decisions. In the Soviet Union, every leader was affected and influenced by his predecessor, and even though both Andropov and Chernenko had particularly short terms in office, their influence, together with the instability that accompanied rapid succession, had a profound impact on the vision and direction of the future. The period of 1982-1985 was not stagnant and the terms of Andropov and Chernenko were far from identical. These were years that fostered ideas of reform, had a great impact on foreign and domestic policy, and allowed the emergence of a new group of leaders and ideas that would continue into the Perestroika years.

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